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POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



THANKS FOR THE mostly great work Rue has put out over the years, but RM#173 is the last issue I buy. I just can't bring myself to spend another dime supporting a magazine that has seemingly devolved into the personal soapbox of Dave Alexander. It's not about your political ideology, it's about being forced to read it as part of a magazine I bought to escape reality and catch up on the latest horror news. It's about seeing the letters section turn into the paid equivalent of an internet argument over the last few issues, while in your editorial in RM#173 you complain about fence wits. Doesn't your staff choose what letters to print? And now, you essentially tell paying readers don't read it if you don't like it, while saying that people threatening to cancel subscriptions are being bullies? I hope you don't feel "bullied" by my letter, Dave, but since the *Morgue* seems to be overflogging with horseshit rather than horror these days, I'm choosing to redirect my discretionary funds to other genre media that has no agenda other than entertainment.

A GORDON, VIA WEBSITE

[Thanks for your letter, A. Gordon. Rue Morgue's "agenda" is to investigate the genre of horror. The editorial page is, by definition, the opinion of the author, it doesn't have bearing on the content in the rest of the issue. We do not screen out letters because they are critical of the publication, and there is no "paid" content in the letters section; only the correspondence we receive from readers. — Ed.]

THANKS FOR featuring Let's Scare Jessica to Death in RM#173! Such a great piece.

04A470108, VIA TWITTER

HAVE JUST HAD your October 2016 double-sized issue, and read the sad news that you will be having a staff change and reducing publication to just every other month! After the very recent demise of *Let's Scare Jessica to Death*, I am so saddened to hear that Rue Morgue is going to be published less often! As a UK-based reader, who gets his magazine via special order from my local comic store, there's almost no decent horror magazines around these days. Your monthly dose of brilliance was what kept me going through these dark days. I will remain a loyal reader, but I only ask one thing: please keep the double-sized Halloween issue, if nothing else! I wish you luck for all your future endeavours, but please remember we all love your magazine, and I really hope that the reduction from eleven to six issues a year is

not the start of a more insidious slippery slope to a cessation of publication in paper in full!

JON GRACUP, VIA FACEBOOK

[Thanks Jon, rest assured our Halloween issues will remain double-sized and though the magazine is changing its publishing schedule, we will still have bi-weekly releases per calendar year with an added five editions of the Rue Morgue Library and a surprise end-of-the-year release. Thanks for reading and don't worry, we plan on being around for a long time to come! — Ed.]

TO LIKE YOU! to check out my embodiment of Edgar A. Poe. I'm also a Marilyn Manson lookalike, I've done Alice Cooper and even the character of the Penguin from the TV series *Gotham*. But perhaps the greatest of all artists I've had the pleasure of imitating is the master of machines: Edgar Allan Poe.

010000110101, VIA INSTAGRAM



RUE MORGUE, thank you for reflecting my interest in cryptids.

@MERQYINTELLECT, VIA TWITTER

I RECENTLY discovered your magazine and I am in love with it. I plan on subscribing in a few weeks. Just felt it should let you know how much I appreciate the work you guys do for making this badass magazine.

JACOB WESSON, VIA WEBSITE

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EXPIRING MINDS

ON RUE MORGUE'S FACEBOOK PAGE

You're 90 percent sure the kid shuffling around in your backyard is a zombie — what do you do?

Ensure the doors are locked, and windows closed and bolted, too. Then I'd sit and watch until I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt, at which point I'd call my friends.

COLLE ECKHART

Keep calm and call Rick O'Connell.

KEVIN MCKENNA

Let a neighbour approach her first... just to be safe.

COLIN ELLIOTT

Buy it again.

SL CHAMBERS

Round her up. Zombies get to be big bucks.

TYLOR HENLEY

Take care. Go to mum's. Kill Phil. Drink Lu. Go to the Winchester. Have a nice cold pint. Wait for all this to blow over.

WILL HOPKINS

POST MORTEM

THE LATEST IN HORROR AND SCIENCE FICTION

ISSUE 100: DOUBLE-SIZED ISSUE

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Unreadlines

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS HORROR HAPPENINGS

BASKIN DIRECTOR RETURNS WITH *HOUSEWIFE*

Baskin writer/director Cem Evrenel began shooting his new movie *Housewife* in Istanbul this past January. In an email interview, the Turkish filmmaker promises that his English-language follow-up to *Baskin*, which debuted during Midnight Madness at the 2015 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and earned him a Best Director award at Fantastic Fest that year, will also be "a cult film shown at midnight."

Where *Baskin* followed a group of male policemen as they explored a portal into Hell, *Housewife* is centered around Holly, a young woman whose mother murdered her father and sister when she was just seven. Two decades later, Holly is losing her grip on reality when she meets Bruce O'Hara, an "international celebrity psycho guru spiritual leader" who wants to help her overcome her childhood trauma. The cast had yet to be announced as of this writing, but Screen Daily suggested in an article posted last March that Danish-Japanese actor David Salazar (TV's *Lilyhammer*) was in the running to play O'Hara.

Evrenel and *Baskin* co-writer Cem Caudanu wanted to make a film about a woman after focusing on "over-masculinity" with *Baskin*. He says it was a challenge he found difficult, but exciting.

"It is again about nightmares, small family and social claustrophobia, I would say. With this one, I think we went back to the mood and atmosphere of my earlier short film *To My Mother and Father*."

Whereas Evrenel has acknowledged the influence of "Bia John Carpenter on *Baskin*, he says that *Housewife* will be in part inspired by the works of Italian filmmakers Lucio Fulci and Dario Argento, albeit with key differences.

"Mainly [in] the mood, colours, use of music, costumes, and the off-beat attitude towards violence and sexuality," Evrenel says. "But not casting and acting."

Expect *Housewife*, like *Baskin*, to combine sex and horror in unpleasant ways, although Evrenel is unsure exactly what the ramifications are of those ideas.

"I don't want to be fully aware of what I'm



Baskin director Cem Evrenel

exploring with this type of subject matter," he admits.

Housewife was first announced last year at Frontlines, the genre co-production market at the Brussels International Fantastic Film Festival (BIFFF). Its tagline was "There's Only You, and Your Dreams."



"When selected for Frontlines, things really took off. We have been writing and rewriting and planning the scenes ever since."

Also debuting at BIFFF was *Housewife*'s creepy logo, reprinted here. Designed by Istanbul-based artist Manolya Unkan, it depicts a hand of glory with an eye in the palm. (According to legend, a hand of glory is the pickled hand of a hanged thief, which has the power to render its victims motionless. It is said to be a thief's aid.)

"Think of this logo more like an old-school Polish poster version of *Housewife*," Evrenel says. "Sometimes those posters seem like they have nothing to do with the film on the surface, but they are deeply connected by what they symbol-

ize. Manolya's logo has that type of a connection with the film and I love it."

As for his decision to film *Housewife* in English, Evrenel points to the fact that he grew up watching English-language movies.

"I always wanted to make a film in English. Why not? I'm still enjoying my filmmaking [skills]—experimenting with camera movement, framing, sound, acting and atmosphere, etc. I'm learning. I'm setting new challenges for myself with each project, and raising the bar with each new project. After *Baskin*, the idea was to make a similar personal film but in English. Then maybe [I'll make] a non-genre film, or an adaptation of a novel hopefully."

With *Baskin*, Evrenel was among only nine filmmakers to be chosen to have a film premiere in 2015's Midnight Madness lineup, the TIFF programming slate reserved for the cruelest and goniest films from around the world. He promises that *Housewife* will similarly qualify for Midnight Madness in terms of its extremity.

"Or maybe Wolfgang, too," Evrenel says, referencing TIFF's so-called "elevated genre" programs. "I love them both."

SEAN PLUMMER

MICK GARRIS MOUNTS NIGHTMARE CINEMA ANTHOLOGY

It's shaping up to be a busy year for Mick Garris, with the director of *The Stand* unveiling several forthcoming projects that will appear across several media platforms. Having spent the last few years writing prose and helming episodes of TV shows such as *Pretty Little Liars* and its supernatural spin-off *Reverend*, as well as two installments of the recently cancelled 1980s-set horror series *Dead of Summer*, the congenial 64-year-old announces his overdue return to film.

"It's a short time commitment, comparatively speaking," he says of why he's been working in television as of late. "and you are surrounded by eager, talented people doing great work. It's telling stories in the visual medium, using all the latest technologies and staying at the front of the curve."

More than a decade after midwifing *Master of Horror* to the small screen, Gams has partnered with Good Deed Entertainment to produce the anthology movie *Nightmares Cinema*. Comprised of five segments and a wraparound, it boasts a roster of acclaimed international directors: Joe Dante (*Gremlins*), Rylline Kobayashi (*The Midnight Meat Train*), David Slade (*30 Days of Night*), Alejandro Bruguas (*Juan of the Dead*) and Gams himself, who will adapt his own disturbing novel *Tyber's Third Act*.

"Finally, after years of trying to get *Alphamale* [directed off the ground, we just this week finalized the deal to make it]," Gornes enthusiastically informs *Mr. Magoo*. "I'm really, really excited about this! [We have encountered] a problem after problem trying to get it going [and were] close so many times, but now we see there is no should be shooting very early in 2017, in Los Angeles, my hometown. Believe it or not, this will only be my second shoot in LA — after an episode of *Pretty Little Liars* — in twenty years. It's an amazing opportunity to gather brilliant directors from all around the world, and me, into one film."

As his portmanteau project steams ahead Garlo confirms that *Insidious*, a period thriller about UFOs scripted by A.J. Ferrara, has failed to launch – despite efforts to develop it first as a feature and then as the pilot for a series.



Director Nick Garcia, and unveil the story that will be adapted for *Nightmare Cinema*.

"It seems hardest to move the most original stuff forward," he laments, before offering an unvarnished take on the current status of the psychological Spanish-language thriller. *Soy Mucho* (written by Mexican novelist Sandra Becerra), the claustrophobic narrative takes place entirely in one house, drawing lofty comparisons to *Reservoir*.

"I was going to make *Soy Me- do* last year, but it fell apart just a couple of weeks before I was going to move to Mexico City to shoot it," explains Garris. "It's a very gritty, dark, violent story about madness, something much darker than you're used to seeing from me, which was one of the reasons I wanted to do it. Also, the fact that it's in Spanish — which I don't speak, but I'm learning."

ing – made it even more interesting. I'm at the point in my career where I just want to do things that are outside of my comfort zone, [that will] keep me evolving and going places I haven't been before."

Despite its cancellation, *Game* merits the picture could still happen as farm interest remains from producers in Mexico and Spain. Meanwhile, he has committed himself to a number of diverse enterprises.

"The word will be out soon, but I'm about to begin a series of horror interview podcasts very much like the *Post Mortem* series we did for FEARnet," Garris exclusively reveals. "Additionally, my novel *Salome* is being released in Mexico and Latin America — in Spanish — on Christmas Day and we are talking about doing a new anthology. I have also written the first chapter in a new novel that I'm calling *Five right now* — and that's not the price of the book!"

MICHAEL DUFFLE



RUE MORGUE CO-PRODUCES SCI-FI HORROR ANTHOLOGY

Fishy computers, tentacle monsters and pregnant men are just a few of the dystopian delights awaiting viewers of *Galaxy of Horror*. Out March 7 on VOD and on disc May 2 from Raven Banner Entertainment, the upcoming sci-fi horror anthology film is the brainchild of Justin McConnell, the founder of Little Terrors, a monthly horror short film festival that has run in Toronto since 2011. (Disclosure: Little Terrors is co-sponsored by Rue Morgue, and founder Rodrigo Guiffo and editor-in-chief Dave Alexander are executive producers of *Galaxy of Horror*.) It follows last fall's release of *Minutes Past Midnight*, the first Little Terrors anthology.

"I'm personally a huge fan of the sci-fi horror subgenre," says McConnell. "Films like the *Alien* series, any of the (Roger) Corman space monster flicks, *The Thing*... I just dig the atmosphere that drops from those films. And when we were narrowing down our possible selections, associate producer Jay Clarke noticed we had a bunch of sci-fi horror, enough that there was a bit of a thematic through-line. So we planned that for the second release."

This anthology's eight segments, all of which



have played Little Terrors, come from the United States, Spain, Germany, Italy and France. The wraparound segment, which was written and directed by McConnell, involves a man in a malfunctioning cyborgic pod forced to watch the films as his life support dwindles. Among the selections are "Ins," about a killer who gets his conscience thanks to his Siri-like phone app, "They Will All Die in Space" (pictured), about the extreme two bodies on a drifting spacecraft will go to survive, "Evelyn," about men trying to reproduce in a world without women, and "Kings,"

about a drug deal gone very wrong.

Whereas *Minutes Past Midnight* was more of a "sampler platter" of horror shorts, McConnell sees connective tissue among *Galaxy of Horror*'s terror tales.

"Beyond the obvious science fiction trappings, there are themes of hopelessness, existential panic and dystopia woven through most of the stories. [There are] a lot of stories where people are pushed to the limits for survival, all wrapped up in a science fiction and horror box."

SEAN PLUMMER

ENTRAILS

Noted visual effects designer Ron Thornton died on November 20 at the age of 58. Born in London, England, Thornton worked

on a variety of genre treasures, including 1986's *Orbiter*, the series finale of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the 2010 remake of George Romero's *The Gruesome Graph* by Hollywood as a pioneer who helped introduce CG to television. Thornton was also an Emmy Award winner for his work on the science fiction series *Babylon 5*.



Producer/director M. Night Shyamalan is spearheading the new *Twelve from the Crypt* television series for TNT. The long-time *Twelve* fan told *Gimme Online*, "I have a list of my favorites [sketches], like my twenty or 30 favorites." The show will be a mix of tales from the original comic book, new stories and crowd-sourced ones, according to TNT president Kevin Reilly, who described the format as "a half-hour anthology and then a one-hour original show with some shorts in between."

The adaptation of Stephen King's *The Dark Tower* has moved from its original February 2017 release date to July 20, 2017. The move was made by Sony Pictures to allow director Nikolaj Arcel and his crew more time to complete the film's visual effects, and to give the adaptation prime summer blockbuster placement. Sony also announced that it has moved its *Fallout* reboots from an August 10, 2017 release to September 29.

Screenwriter Eric Heisserer, who had been tapped to write an adaptation of Neil Gaiman's classic Vertigo comic series *The Sandman*, announced that he has departed the project. In a Reddit AMA (Ask Me Anything), Heisserer told readers that he believed the source material is more suited to an HBO series or limited series, "not as a feature film, not even a trilogy." No new names are attached to the film, which currently sits with New Line Cinema.

The *Witch* director David Eggers has confirmed that his next movie will be a remake of F.W. Murnau's

classic 1922 vampire film *Nosferatu*. In an interview with *IndieWire*, Eggers stated, "It feels ugly and blasphemous and offensive and disgusting to me as a filmmaker in my place to do *Nosferatu* now. I was really planning on making a white, but that's how late shock out." No release date has been announced.

After years in development as a film, Ridley Scott's production company, Scott Free, is teaming up with 20th Century Fox Television, screenwriter Liz Hatcher and *Overland* and *Let Me* in director Matt Reeves for a TV adaptation of Justin Cronin's *The Passage*. The first novel in the recently completed trilogy, begins as a government conspiracy tale before morphing into a post-apocalyptic horror story.

AristoScope Pictures and American Mythology are set to bring the *Matchless* film franchise to a different medium. Creator Adam Green announced via Instagram that the character of Victor Crowley would return in 2017 for a series of comic books. Crowley was last seen in 2012's *Matchless 3*.

AMY BURNS

MONSTRO BIZARRO

According to *LiveScience*, the recent discovery of a wrecked WWI German submarine off the coast of Scotland has dropped up tales of a sea monster. According to marine archaeologist James McCartney, the vessel is believed to be the UB-82, one of two U-boats sunk by the British Royal Navy in 1918. The second ship—the UB-85, which has yet to be found—has an even "more interesting history," as it remained to be built, then "attacked by a sea monster" before sinking. As recounted in a story that surfaced on the Internet a decade ago, the captain of the UB-85 claimed a huge creature emerged from the Irish Sea and attacked the submarine. The crew repelled it with gunfire, but not before it damaged the vessel in the point where it couldn't submerge. A British ship subsequently sank it. Though efforts to find solid corroborating evidence have failed, the Irish Sea does have a history of creature sightings.

LYLE BLACKBURN

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CORONER'S REPORT

WEIRD STATS & MORBID FACTS

PAGE 174

On November 11, 2016, Facebook experienced a glitch wherein it began displaying tens of thousands of active users dead and converting their pages to memorial pages.

Bonnie Zachert, creator of the *My Little Pony* toy line, is the niece of horror host "Cool Ghoul" John Zachert.

In the early 1900s, the energy drink Radiflor was introduced, its ingredients consisted of radium dissolved in water. Advertising of the product suggested it would also cure other ailments such as male impotence. It, of course, slowly poisoned its users.

Mexican Dave Navarro (Jesse's Addiction, Red Hot Chili Peppers) has a strong interest in true crime, which he attributes to his mother's murder when he was fifteen years old. In 2015 he made the documentary *Following Son* about her death.

The scenes inside the Bates Motel in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* were shot on the same soundstage that was previously made famous by *The Phantom of the Opera*.

A severe case of "thunderbolt" asthma — a medical condition prevalent in Australia when storms kick up an unusual amount of pollen — sent thousands of people to the hospital in November unable to breathe. Six died, while another 30 ended up in the ICU.

Scientists researching horror film's effects on the body have determined that scary movies not only raise heart rates but they also boost viewers' white cell counts.

From the 1800s to the early 1900s, sin eaters were employed in parts of the United Kingdom. Their job was to eat a loaf of bread that had been placed on a dead person's chest. It was believed the sins were absorbed by the bread and then taken on by the sin eater when consumed.

The town at Senda Mine in *Abalooeen W' Season of the Witch* gets its name from the town in 1890's *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

In the old Julian calendar Halloween was celebrated on November 13, but when our date keeping changed to the Gregorian calendar a shift of eleven days took place, moving the holiday to October 31. In some parts of Ireland, Old Samhain is still observed.

When compared to other genres, horror movie scores tend to have the least music.

In June, a 20-year-old man died when he slipped into one of the boiling springs at Yellowstone National Park. The acidic hot spring dissolved his body before it could be recovered.

The infamous medical shows on *The Exorcist* were the creation of well-known illustrator and set designer Dennis Dackman (St. Paul, Iron Man 2, *NGV: Legend*), who fabricated them out of modified propelling axioms. They were the first thing he designed to ever appear on screen.

COMPILED BY KIMBERLY K. KIBLER
FOR A WEIRD STAT OR MORBID FACT, SEND IT TO: REPORT@WEIRDSTATS.COM

BODY HORROR

BARBDOCK HALF-SLEEVE

ARTIST: Joe K. Marcell (@joe_k_marshall)

“I’m obsessed with all things horror, so when I started tattooing, I knew that’s what I wanted to specialize in. Horror tattoos: I work in both colors and black and grey, and do quite a few large-scale pieces. I particularly enjoyed working on this piece, as I personally think *The Barbadock* is one of the best movies to come out in recent years!”

HAVE A GREAT HOLIDAY! TAG US ON INSTAGRAM: [@weirdstats](https://www.instagram.com/weirdstats)

THE RIDE MORGUE SICK TOP SIX SCHOOL-AGE ZOMBIE RAGE



- 1. DAWN OF THE DEAD (2004)**
VIVIAN HAS A BITE IN THE BEDROOM
- 2. BURIAL GROUND**
MICHAEL'S ENRAGED NIP RIP
- 3. THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS**
FERAL FLESH EATERS GO SAVAGE IN SUPERMARKET
- 4. COOTIES**
PLAYGROUND FACILITY FEAST
- 5. NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD**
THROUNCHED BY KAREN'S TROWEL
- 6. THE CHILD**
FACES FLIPPED BY BITTING RUGERATS



TORTURED TAGLINE

DEATH MACHINES (2014)

“THE KILLERS OF THE FUTURE ARE READY NOW”

FINAL WORDS



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WHAT IS THAT? CHARNEL?”

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EVELYN JOHNSTON
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MIDNIGHT CREEP



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2 FRIGHTENSTEIN PINS/PATCHES \$12 / \$7

The candle lights are growing dim, it's time for a Frightenstein patch or pin. Ghoul-ish Gary Puckin presents official Hilarious House of Frightenstein swag: pins of The Count, The Wraithman and Igor, and a patch of the show's iconic logo, reimagined for the modern monster.

3 SPIDERWEB FOIL COFFIN BAG \$32

Because carrying your valuables in a casket is unwise, check out this Spiderweb Foil Coffin Bag, with a practical bone handle, detachable shoulder strap, coffin-shaped zipper pulls and inner ID pocket. At 25cm wide, 18cm high and 9cm deep, it makes creepers' compact and classy.

4 PENNANT AND AIR FRESHENER PACK \$18

Fly your freak flag and smell the fear with 2 Ghoulia Press' pennant and air freshener bundle. Pennants are 8" x 24" and double-sided, and air fresheners come in a four-pack of Camp Crystal Lake Blue (pine-scented) and a four-pack of Camp Crystal Lake Red (jannet-men roll-scented). Ki-ki-is...sniff-sniff-sniff...

All prices in USD unless otherwise indicated.
Items available at Rue Morgue.com until
February 21, 2017



CRYPTIC COLLECTIBLES

DRACULA AND FRANKENSTEIN VIEWMASTER REELS

UMC Corporation, 1979

As part of its "Classic Tales" series, the General Amline & Hile (GAP) Corporation released View-Master reels (cardboard discs containing photo slides for use in a hand-held plastic viewer) for the horror classics *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. The sets were sold both with and without illustrated read-along booklets. The company

also released a *Wolf Man* set in 1978. Still-sealed specimens have sold for \$40 apiece on eBay, while opened sets can fetch \$50 to \$15 each.

JAMES BURNELL

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MIDNIGHT**



Ten
Starts
At
Midnight

"MAY BE THE NEXT GENERATION OF
HORROR MASTERS."

-Ain't It Cool News

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HYBRID CHILD ZOMBIES, AN APOCALYPTIC FUNGAL INFECTION AND PARALLELS TO FRANKENSTEIN - COLM MCCARTHY'S ADAPTATION OF **THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS** IS JUST WHAT THE UNDERO SUGENRE NEEDED

FEED THE CHILDREN

MONICA KUEHLER

YOU'D BE SURPRISED IF YOU FELT THE WHOLE ZOMBIE THING IS A LITTLE PLAYED OUT.

At *The Hunger*, which closes this year's seventh season and returns the title to the boy-and-girl-monsters-for-Indie-teens genre, it's a quick and clever way to break the 'hollywood' clichés that have become familiar if not painfully explicit: A parade of diminishing returns.

Memorably speaking, we've become fixated on death as the end point, being eaten by the undead, becoming one of them, being mugged in a lawless world and—in the grand scheme of things—the end of the entire human race. But what about another form of life, a together submitting us, changing us, replacing us? And what happens after all that? What happens ten years later? How about trying? Do the zombie continue endlessly in their bone, relentless state or do they too find ways to evolve and survive? To paraphrase a line in *Jurassic Park*, does life find a way?

There's an inherent freshness in those questions, which is why *The Girl With All the Gifts*—both the 2014 book by Mike Casy (writing as M.R. Carey) and the now film, also scripted by him—feels like such a departure from other tales of the undead. It gives us a vision of a future where nature itself is at war with humanity. A legend of hope remains, but it balances on a pinhead.

Set out in February in North America from Elevation Pictures, the latest do-over of the zombie story line also digs further by building its narrative around an infected child, Melisae (played by twelve-year-old newcomer Samia Sami), a military sergeant (Paddy Considine) and a pair

of strong women embroiled in a constant conflict about Melisae's future. Gemma Arterton's character, teacher Helen Justinau, develops a maternal bond with the young hungry (the infected are referred to as "hungries" in the story), while Dr. Caroline Caldwell (Siân Cusack) wants to dissect her to find a cure.

The film opens in a military complex where Melisae and other young hungries are imprisoned, educated (while restrained), studied and taken apart in a lab. They differ from the adult infected—who claw at the base's forced perimeter in mindless hunger—in that, aside from a ravenous appetite activated when they're close to the uninfected, they're seemingly normal children. The military scientists believe those differences may be at the heart of finally finding a way to reverse the devastating fungal infection, but not it all.

Reckoning the crisis in a fungus—based on actual real-world organisms that infect and control the behavior of insects and small mammals—is a handy conceit that brings with it a built-in roadmap for a visually distinctive film. So many years after the original outbreak, not only are the hungries taking over but nature is taking back the urban areas we carved from it. Girl's monsters are not supernatural, and, as such, it's largely their connection with nature that defines them. As our main characters are forced to face the bias, they come face to face with the world as it is now: wild and brutalized by infected who spend an inordinate time in the streets, partly because the grass in the wind, until a mouse or insect alerts them to the presence of food. They aren't so much eating as existing

into a new form of life. And as with all things in nature, both the fungus and the evolving young hungerers (who in the wild have united in feral gangs) have a purpose and an inevitability about them that drives the film to its challenging, unconventional conclusion.

Rue Morgue spoke to director Colin McCarthy (Vicecity, British TV's *Peaky Blinders*), following the film's premiere at the 2016 Toronto International Film Festival, about all things fungal, imbuing *Gin* with a strong emotional backbone, and how the best horror stories always have something deeper to say about who we are as a species.

YOU'VE WORKED IN A LOT OF DIFFERENT GENRES OVER THE COURSE OF YOUR DIRECTING CAREER; DO HORROR STORIES CALL TO YOU?

I think a lot of stories that we don't even think of as horror stories are horror stories, like most fairy tales are horror stories. So, if you're into stories I think it's odd to not be into horror in any way. As a teenage kid, I devoured horror movies, I had a kind of morbid disposition. I remember watching *Jaws* when I was, like, seven and just being absolutely terrified, but I kept wanting to go back to the pot for more of the scary stuff after that. So, yeah, for sure, I like horror movies a lot.

HOW DID YOU BECOME ATTACHED TO THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS?

Mike [Deery] had written a short story, which is the basis of both the book and the film, which Cam [Gardner], the producer, had shown to me and we all met up and started talking. Out of those conversations an idea for an end, which is the end of both the film and the book, came up and we started to work that up. Mike wrote a first treatment for the film and that became the basis for both the film and the book. Then we changed a lot of stuff with that treatment to make it more streamlined for a film, but the things that were streamlined out were still really good and so Mike started writing the book from that. So after that treatment, the book went one way and the film went another, not radically different. I don't think, but more about things like point-of-view, Melanie's point-of-view. The junkies that are in the book aren't in the film and just other things that let like they were the right thing to do for the film took it away from the journey that Mike went on with the book. He finished the book and the script around the same time, the book got published immediately and the process of financing the film, which was very quick for film financing, still took a little longer, but the publishing of the book really helped with the financing of the film and so it's kind of got

legged now as "based on the book," which is a slightly complicated thing to explain to people as it's actually not that.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT THE STORY THAT MADE YOU WANT TO DIRECT IT?

The thing that was right at the point of wanting to develop it was the character of Melanie and this central idea about an innocent that's a monster and a monster that's an innocent. Mike says that in a way it's like a re-imagining of the Frankenstein monster because it has that same thing, the monster in Mary Shelley's book is fundamentally an innocent who's kind of made bad by circumstances. There's a similar sort of dynamic with Melanie's character, and that thing with that character, more than anything else, was the thing that was compelling, especially once we came up with the idea for the end. When you've got a cool end like that and the opportunity to sort of fuck with the audience a little bit, flip things on them, surprise people—that's what I love in stories when I'm watching stuff, and the opportunity to make that for other people.

HOW INVOLVED WAS MIKE DEERY IN THE FILMING PROCESS?

We tried to have Mike [be not] every moment we could because he was such a great energy to



Captive Audience Melanie (Sandra Nakhel) joins her estranged childhood in a military bunker, and (opposite, from left) continues surrounded the base, and (l-r) Dr. Caroline Gifford (Glorie Deery), Helen Jackson (Sandra Aronson), Sgt. Eddie Pinks (Paddy Considine) and Kevin Gallagher (Fionnuala Flanagan)

around. I mean, in terms of how much did he bring production, he just made us all feel better when he was there, because he's the biggest fan of the film. The last three days of the film, we shot the base breakout, which includes the big reveal of the burgers and he is the first head shot in the film. Mike gets a special treat for being our number one fan as well as the creator.

TELL US ABOUT FINDING THE ROLE OF MELANIE.

The process of casting Senna was complicated and it was exhaustive. We saw over 1,000 girls on tape and I met about 500 little girls, and the very last girl to walk in the room was Senna. It definitely was an exciting thing when she arrived in the room, there was a sense that there was something special about her. And she was streamlined into a process that had already gone through quite a few stages with other girls and she was very quickly in the room chemistry reading with Genesis. It was exciting because she felt like she had the right combination of innocence and a kind of real rawness about her acting.

WAS THE REST OF YOUR CAST EASIER TO COME BY?

Even a relatively low-budget film like ours relies on cast as part of the financing process, and that's never totally easy but we were lucky to get the people we really wanted to do the film. Glenn [Close] just responded to the script really well and Freddy [Dizendev] was someone I wanted to work with since the first time I saw him on-screen, and Gamma I loved in *The Glass Menagerie* of *Alfie*. I love her naturalistic work. She's obviously done a lot of different kinds of films, but I knew that she could be somebody who could just naturally be Miss Justness, which is a key part in the film.

DID YOU EVER GET ANY PUSHBACK TO TURN IT INTO A MORE TRADITIONAL TYPE OF ZOMBIE STORY?

Come protected the story from the get-go. Her, Mike and I were all very much on the same page, so yes, there were companies who said, we can help you make this film for \$30 million or whatever if you make it with Canadian films playing the part that Senna's playing. I think the biggest thing we were doing that was controversial was the gender alignment of the main characters, the fact that we were making a film about women that weren't defined by their sexuality or their relationship to the men in the film.

THE OPENING IN THE MILITARY INSTALLATION - WITH ITS STARK, BLUE-GRAY SETS AND SOUND DESIGN - IS INCREDIBLY EFFECTIVE IN SETTING THE FILM'S TONE.

The look of the film is partly a collaboration. Simon Davies, the DP, and I had previously worked on [British television series] *Paddy Benders* together. We had a sort of atmospheric meeting of the minds or whatever about how we liked to create visuals but I knew throughout the devel-



WE SENT A CREW TO PRIPYAT IN CHERNOBYL FOR SOME OF THE BIG CITYSCAPE STUFF BECAUSE I DIDN'T JUST WANT TO HAVE A CGI-RUINED CITY.
COLM MCCARTHY

opment that it seemed to me there was a fun game to be played with continually defying the audience's expectations of the film. So part of that thing of the opening is about really settling in to one kind of a movie in the hopes of when it becomes a slightly different kind of movie that it can be surprising to the audience. A lot of the decisions were based around that.

HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT BALANCING THE ZOMBIE ACTION WITH THE MORE EMOTIONAL, HUMANISTIC ELEMENTS OF THE FILM?

I love superhero films and I love comics and I was brought up on Irish mythology and folk stories by my dad, who is a great storyteller. I like fantastical content but I think the good stories say something that's profound or fundamental, at least, about the human experience. And if you've got a really good story, it should have something of that in it, and have something you want to say or something you want to investigate and figure out... through the process of telling the story. Our influences were more - do you know John Wyndham and his literature? We talked about Ray Bradbury and Ursula Le Guin and lots of genre writers who write quite fantastical stuff but also have skill to say Shakespeare is the epitome of

high literature and his work has people baked in pie and casting spells and summoning up storms. I don't think stuff like that should be fantastical and genre stuff should be dumb. That's a kind of really reductive, boring point of view that I think a lot of the mainstream film critics often hold to be true.

DID YOU LOOK TO OTHER FILMS FOR VISUAL INSPIRATION?

Definitely, in a way, but maybe not what you might expect. The films that we watched together as filmmakers during the process were *Apocalypse Now*, because I wanted to create a sense of jungle in the second half of the film, a kind of forested feel for the wilder act of the movie, and *Children of Men* because I knew that I wanted to use lots of long takes and have sections of the film that were a bit unblinkling in their approach and that was an influence.

THE MOVIE ALSO BORROWS A FEW BIT OF "GIRL POP." HOW DID THAT COME ABOUT?

We looked at a lot of websites that featured urban exploration. We did a bit of it; I actually went out and shot a music video for my brother's band. We went and broke into an [abandoned] hospital and there was an overgrown look to

AUTHOR/SCREENWRITER MIKE CAREY TAKES US INSIDE THE UNCONVENTIONAL EVOLUTION OF
THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS

THE MAKING OF MELANIE

by MONICA S. KUEGLER

SOMETIMES WHAT HAPPENS BEHIND THE SCENES OF A STORY IS AS INTERESTING AS THE STORY ITSELF. Case in point: *The Girl With All the Gifts*, which began its life as a work of short fiction and later blossomed into a novel and movie—simultaneously.

But first, let's set the stage. Author Mike Carey (*The Devil You Know* and comics *Lucifer* and *The Unwritten*) met director Colm McCarthy and producer Camille Golin when his agent set up a meeting. Golin had the rights to a young adult sci-fi novel and needed a screenwriter. Carey proved the right fit. When the option on that book lapsed, Golin felt it would be a shame if the trio didn't attempt to launch another project.

"What else could we do?" she asked, and Carey had an idea.

"I said we could do something post-apocalyptic," he tells *Rue Morgue* over the phone from his home in England. "I had this short story that I showed her the rough draft of: the short story for *The Girl With All the Gifts*, which at that time was called 'Iphigeneia in Aulis.' She liked it and Colm liked it. Colm was very excited about shooting a movie that would use named and abandoned locations in the UK."

But even the birth of "Iphigeneia in Aulis"—in which the young hungry Melanie appears for the first time—was a bit unusual. It was the result of an invitation to submit to *An Apple for the Creature*, a school-days-themed anthology edited by Charlene Harris and Toni L.P. Kether. Carey agreed, and then almost immediately encountered an unforeseen difficulty: writer's block.

"I came up with a lot of bad ideas that were very derivative," he admits. "Some of them were derivatives of *Harry Potter*. Then I woke up one day with the idea of a little girl sitting in a classroom, she's writing

the essay that everyone writes during their schooldays: what I want to be when I grow up. But we can see that she's one of the undead, that she's a zombie, that growing up is not an option for her. That was the spark from which the short story grew... and then I had the idea that Melanie has never experienced the real world, but she's heard lots and lots of stories. She's been about told myths and legends and she's built her perception of the world from those myths and legends."

Carey finished the tale but couldn't get Melanie out of his head. Even before the idea of turning "Iphigeneia in Aulis" into a movie was refocused, he knew there was more he wanted to explore in that world he'd created. He showed the story to his editors at Little Brown, with whom he was contractually obligated to write a different book, and began the process of renegotiating the deal so he could pen *Girl* instead. As it turned out, the book and the movie were greenlit at almost the same time, which led to the author working on the novel and the screenplay simultaneously, something he considers a real boon for both versions.

"It was incredibly liberating and incredibly productive because it felt like I was just living in that story space the whole time and finding two different routes through it, and two different solutions to the same set of narrative problems and, in a word way, doing that highlighted where the bumps in the road were going to come," he explains.

Among the key differences between the book and the movie are the omission of the *Junipers* (a rogue faction of humans) from the film, and that the book's story is told from five distinctive POVs (Melanie and four of the adults traveling with her), while the movie places us firmly in Melanie's experience.

"The movie was entirely dependent on making you align your perspective with Melanie's and making you buy her as a little girl before you realize she's a monster, so we didn't have the luxury of jumping from one POV to another," says Carey, noting that there are only about five minutes of the





Nature And Nurture: A weakened Melrose travels through the remnants of London with the military forces, and (right) Sgt. Parks helps the girl's face guard

film in which Melanie is not on screen.

The scene Carey most regrets having to cut, however, actually got filmed but ended up on the cutting room floor.

"The scene in which Miss Justness is teaching the children about nature,"

he elaborates. "It's a biology lesson, and she brings flowering branches into the classroom because it's springtime...and she tells them about the different ways flowering plants germinate...Parks interrupts the lesson and basically locks the kids' hands down again so they can't hold the branches. The lesson is completely sabotaged. It's poignant in itself, it's an illustration of the clash of personalities between the two adults, but it also sets up Melanie's final decision [in the climax of the story]."

And while that decision definitively marks the end of the tale, both onscreen and on page — according to Carey there isn't much mileage in a sequel as it would be a different kind of tale that would have to focus on the creation of a new society — the world of the hungrins still beckoned to the author. So much so, in fact, that he's written a prequel, *The Girl on the Bridge* (out in May), that explores one of Girl's most sinking set pieces.

"There is a moment in *Girl* where they find this gigantic armored truck, which is also a mobile laboratory," he explains. "It's lying in the middle of London — in the book, there's a single dead body in the cab, in the movie

it's completely abandoned — so what happened to the crew, what was their mission, why did they stop when they got to London, where did they go, and what part did the first children, Melanie's second-generation hungrins, play in that story? That's

what I wrote, and I'm really happy with how it came out. You can read it as a stand-alone story but there's lots of Easter eggs for people who know *The Girl With All the Gifts*. In particular, there's an ending which answers a lot of the big questions that people come out of *Girl* with, specifically what happens to Helen Justness."



that. We were always looking for real overgrown spaces. The hospital in the film is — it's funny, the production designer did a lot of work, especially on the exteriors, but that hospital we found was pretty much like that. That was one of the most exciting discoveries during pre-production. We sent a crew to Pripyat in Chernobyl for some of the big chyspace stuff because I didn't just want to have a CGI-rund city. We wanted to have real photographic stuff in there.

BEYOND SEEKING OUT LOCATIONS THAT WERE ACTUALLY OVERGROWN, WHAT ELSE DID YOU DO TO REFLIZE YOUR POST-APOCYPTIC WORLD?

We tried to adopt photographic techniques whenever possible within the CGI, so when we were doing visual effects shots they would involve lots of photographic elements, a lot of the textures that are applied to surfaces are photographic. There are a lot of visual effects shots in the film but most of them are 2D and 2.5D matte paintings and textual additions to stuff that's there. So the real part of the set will be there and then we're layering up other stuff that we shot...Kristian Masted, the production designer, did quite a lot of work in adapting locations too, and trying to figure out the smart ways of doing that because our budget was limited compared to a film like *I Am Legend* or *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* that were doing nature taking over.

THIS IDEA OF NATURE TAKING OVER GOES MUCH DEEPER THAN JUST THE SETS AND SPECIAL EFFECTS THOUGH, DOESN'T IT?

It was a big emotional theme, the idea of the fecundity of nature, and there's also being a horror in life sometimes. There's a great passage in John Updike's *Witches of Blackwood* — the book, not the film, which is very, very different — where he talks about the smell in the forest in summer sometimes being like an overpowering stench and that life can smell quite like excrement. It's true and I never heard that put into words before reading that bit, but again, we talked about that passage leading up to it and the idea of life being oppressive. And obviously the fungus *Ophiocordyceps unilateralis* is a real thing. When Mike first mentioned it as an idea for the concept for what causes the zombies, Cam and I both got really excited because we'd seen the same *The Private Life of Plants* documentary, and were freaked out by it too. We watched some TED Talks about fungi — and how they affect free will. There's a real fungus that exists in rats that when they get it into them it programs them to go up to cats and stand around, and the cats kill them and the cats get infected with the fungus too and then pass it out to eat. And then they excrete it as their feces and rats eat it and that's how its life cycle works, but it programs those rats to be suicidal in a similar way to the way the ants that get *Ophiocordyceps* are suicidal.

Nature is dark.

HOW DID YOU DECIDE WHAT THE ZOMBIES SHOULD LOOK LIKE, GIVEN THAT IT'S A FUNGAL INFECTION?

Well, we looked at fungus. We were kind of joking, "Oh, yeah, it'll be like athlete's foot all over





Ranger For Knowledge: *Mo'Nique in her restraints after feeding; and (L-R) Dr. Caldwell and Dr. Selick (Anastasia Marano) prepare for a procedure*

your body," and then we started doing actual research and there are some really nasty fungal infections that affect people. Nadia Stacey, our makeup designer, did quite a lot of research and presented me with some images that I will never forget that have really harmed people. Because, like anything, when you go to the Third World and there's less access to medicine, things run rife and some of the African fungal infections that have been unchecked by medical science do hideous, deforming things to people's bodies.

HOW DO YOU MOTIVATE CHILDREN TO PLAY REALISTIC CANIBALS? PARTICULARLY YOUR LEAD?
There were quite a few different things, I think, that played into Sonoma's performance. We had about three weeks of rehearsal and preparation and that was split between time spent with me going through the script, talking about the journey in detail, really thinking about what the character was feeling in each scene and kind of plotting that journey, but then also physical preparation. We had a great stunt coordinator, Mark Moltram, who's done *The Jungle Book* and quite a lot of big films. He was really good at pushing the kids but keeping things safe for them and getting that balance right, to deliver something that felt real but dramatic physically. Then we also had a guy, Dan O'Neill, who was a movement director who'd done a lot of movement work with the National Opera and stuff like that and he developed the physical language of the hunger for the film because we wanted something that didn't just feel like a load of people from a zombie appreciation club turning up.

WERE THERE ANY SCENES THAT PROVED PARTICULARLY CHALLENGING TO FILM?

I guess the fight sequence at the end. If you are

going to do a really vicious fight with children that's quite challenging because you have to be constantly monitoring. A big influence for me as [director] Alan Clarke, he made a lot of so-called realist films in the '80s in the UK — *Scum*, *Made in Britain* — but his approach, is that he would let violent scenes flow and his thing was the unblinking eye. If you've been in a pub when someone comes in and glasses someone else, it's not all about cuts and doing dramatic angles for the violence, it's about the unblinking eye and that's when violence is shocking. So, that leads to when you do a fight scene with kids and you want to have a whole scene where two kids are absolutely battering each other and you want to let the scene run but you also want to make it look real and like the blows are happening.

SO HOW DO YOU ACCOMPLISH THAT SEQUENCE?

We shot that right near the end of the shoot and we were rehearsing from three weeks before the start of the shoot, so there was a long process of rehearsals and developing the physical language of the feral children in the film. We had these groups of workshops with the kids where they had to learn how to break down their inhibitions about being children with each other and picking each other's noses and scratching each other's feet. You know, kids, especially of the opposite sex, don't want to be right next to each other like that when they get to a certain age and that was the age we were dealing with, which is the cusp of puberty, so the first day of the first workshop

there were groups of boys and girls who knew each other that were all separate, and by the time we shot with the feral kids they were all lying together in a heap, like a close of lamers or something. That was the behaviour we needed around the fight sequence. And then the fight itself, and getting that to be fully brutal, it was really hard work, in particular for Sonoma because she had to dominate that situation.

I'VE SEEN A FEW PEOPLE ONLINE LABEL THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS AS A YOUNG ADULT FILM — PROBABLY A RESULT OF ITS LEAD. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?

To be honest, if it works for people as a YA film then that's great, it's a massive market and I think that market is mis-served the other way. It's interesting, I think a lot of the times some of the high-profile YA films have necessarily toned down a lot of violent content from the book in order to make the film palatable for a YA audience and I think a lot of teens will actually respond really well to the film. My kids have seen it and they're fourteen and fifteen and they loved it and I think that a lot of the time they get patronized by those YA films, so if it works for people in that way that's great. In terms of it being a horror film and having a specific horror audience, I hope it works for those people too. I actually think it's more challenging than most zombie films. A lot of zombie films now are being made as mainstream Hollywood trips and I hope that people like the zombie thing but maybe get something more out of it. ☺






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THE YEAR IN REVIEW



WOMEN ARE KICKING ASS ALL OVER THE GENRE

Years 2016 saw them run louder, stronger, and more resilient. As for our list goes, tough, resourceful female protagonists made a mark (and other wounds) in films such as *No Cloverfield Lane* and *Don't Breathe*, while *I Am the Pretty Thing That Lives in the House*, *The Witch* and intense thriller *Under the Shadow* offered specifically female-centred survivalists. Then there was *The Girl With All the Gifts*, which presented a person of colour as its truly original protagonist, she was as over as much as *Barren*, the breakout character in the Netflix series *Stranger Things*. And while we look forward to seeing more female creators making major leaps in 2017, we were thrilled to honour two of the greatest authors Shirley Jackson (who also influenced *I Am the Pretty Thing*, on what would've been her 100th birthday), and Mary Shelley, on the 200th anniversary of *Frankenstein*.

Travelling back to a horror film genre's greatest yearning, 1970s to a variety of series proved, beyond the beloved *Stranger*, *Supernatural* and *Shadows* our love for the '70s to be at a fever pitch, as *WBS* *Stranger* channel's first came back, there was a new *Ghostbusters* movie and *Netflix* over as the original *Witchy* played again for the first time since '83. If you prefer to go further back in the genre, this was also a stellar year for non-fiction history books, particularly for vampire fans, who were treated to several new titles surrounding *Dracula*, his creator and his forged forebears.

And finally, we mourned the loss of some of the most colourful figures in horror, including *Witchy* *Clayton Kopp*, *Angus Scrimm*, *Robin Hardy*, and *V. V. Woods* and our own *Rae Morgan*. We're Richard *Slammon*. Their contributions to the genre live on as we see what the new year has in store.



BEST TELEVISION
STRANGER THINGS

Netflix



BEST FEATURE
THE WITCH

Written by
Elvira Pictures



FESTIVAL FAVOURITE
THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS

Netflix
Elevation Pictures

BEST SCARY TV MOVIE

KODIE
Netflix



BEST WEB FEATURE
UNDER THE SHADOW
Netflix
Vertical Entertainment

BEST FRESH HORROR YEAR UP



TO CLOVERFIELD LANE
Netflix
Paramount



MOST ORIGINAL CONCEPT
DON'T BREATHE
(for making a *House of Horror* series film)
Netflix
Screen Gems

BEST DOCUMENTARY



BEWARE THE SLENDERMAN
Netflix
Ind Documentary Films



BEST FILM YOU WOULDN'T SEE
I AM THE PRETTY THING THAT LIVES IN THE HOUSE
Netflix

MAP OUT YOUR YEAR IN HORROR
WITH THIS GUIDE TO THE
WORLD'S BEST GENRE EVENTS

2017 HORROR CONVENTION AND FILM FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

HORROR CONVENTIONS

JANUARY 25 - 30
HAUNTCON

(Tradeshow for haunted attraction
and Halloween industries)
Nashville, Tennessee
hauntcon.com

FEBRUARY 3 - 5
DAYS OF THE DEAD

Atlanta, Georgia
daysofthedead.net

MARCH 3 - 5
HORROR REALM CON

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
horrorrealmcon.com

MARCH 4
**UNDERGROUND MONSTER
CARNIVAL**

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
undergroundmonstercarnival.com

MARCH 10 - 12
MONSTER-MANIA CON

Cherry Hill, New Jersey
monstermania.net

MARCH 17 - 19
HORRORHOUND WEEKEND

Cincinnati, Ohio
horrorhoundweekend.com

MARCH 23 - 26
**TRANSWORLD'S HALLOWEEN
& ATTRACTIONS SHOW**

(Wholesalers' convention,
not open to general public)
St. Louis, Missouri
tashow.com

MARCH 24 - 26
MAD MONSTER PARTY

Rock Hill, South Carolina
madmonster.com

MARCH 31 - APRIL 2
WONDERCON

Anaheim, California
conline-con.org/wcon

APRIL 7 - 9
CINEMA WASTELAND

Birmingham, Ohio
cinemawasteland.com

APRIL 7 - 9
MONSTERPALOOZA

Pasadena, California
monsterpalooza.com

APRIL 21 - 23
SPOOKY EMPIRE

Orlando, Florida
spookyempire.com

APRIL 27 - 30
**CALGARY COMIC AND
ENTERTAINMENT EXPO**

Calgary, Alberta
calgaryexpo.com

APRIL 27 - 30
STOKERCON

Long Beach, California
stokercon2017.org

APRIL 28 - 30
**CHILLER THEATRE
TOY, MODEL, AND FILM EXPO**

Princeton, New Jersey
chillertheatre.com

APRIL 28 - 30
MOTOR CITY NIGHTMARES

Novi, Michigan
motorcitynightmares.com

MAY 5 - 7
CRYPTICON

Seattle, Washington
crypticonseattle.com

MAY 5 - 7
TEXAS FRIGHTMARE WEEKEND

Dallas, Texas
texasfrightmareweekend.com

MAY 12 - 14
WEST COAST HAUNTERS CON

Portland, Oregon
hauntersconvention.com

MAY 19 - 21
MAD MONSTER PARTY

Scottsdale/Phoenix Hills, Arizona
madmonster.com

MAY 25 - 28
MEGA CON

Orlando, Florida
megaconorlando.com

JUNE 2 - 4
FALLS HORROR FEST

Nagaza Falls, Canada
nagazafallsconvention.com

JUNE 2 - 4
SEARE-A-CON

Springfield, Massachusetts
seareacon.com

JUNE 9 - 11
SCIFIL VALLEY CON

Altamira, Pennsylvania
scifilvalleycon.com



JUNE 10 - 11
CALGARY HORROR CON
Calgary, Alberta
horror-con.ca

JUNE 10 - 11
SINISTER CREATURE CON
Stockton, California
sinistercreaturecon.com

JUNE 23 - 25
MONSTER BASH
Mills, Pennsylvania
monsterbashnews.com/bash.html

JUNE 30 - JULY 2
DAYS OF THE DEAD
Indianapolis, Indiana
daysofthedead.net

JULY 18A
- 19B
DARK CARNIVAL
HORROR CULT & ENTERTAINMENT EXPO
Hamilton, Ontario
darkcarnivalexpo.com

JULY 14 - 16
BLOOFEST
Piscataway, Pennsylvania
theobloodtheatre.com

JULY 14 - 16
CRYPTICON KANSAS CITY
St. Joseph, Missouri
crypticonkansascity.com

JULY 14 - 16
GFFEST
Rosemont, Illinois
g-fun.com

JULY 20 - 22
COMIC-CON INT'L
San Diego, California
comic-con.org

JULY 20 - 22
**SCARES THAT CARL
CHARITY WEEKEND**
Williamsburg, Virginia
scaresforthehomelessweekend.com

JULY 29 - 30
**MIDSUMMER SCREAM
HALLOWEEN FESTIVAL**
Long Beach, California
midsummer-scream.org

AUGUST 4 - 5
FLASHBACK WEEKEND
Rosemont, Illinois
flashbackweekend.com

AUGUST 18 - 20
MONSTER-MANIA CON
Cherry Hill, New Jersey
monstermania.net

SEPTEMBER 18A
**EDMONTON COMIC &
ENTERTAINMENT EXPO**
Edmonton, Alberta
edmontonexpo.com

SEPTEMBER 1 - 3
DAYS OF THE DEAD
Louisville, Kentucky
daysofthedead.net

SEPTEMBER 1 - 4
DRAGON CON
Atlanta, Georgia
dragoncon.org

SEPTEMBER 8 - 10
HORRORHOOD WEEKEND
Indianapolis, Indiana
horrorhoodweekend.com

SEPTEMBER 20 - OCTOBER 1
MONSTER-MANIA CON
Hunt Valley, Maryland
monstermania.net

SEPTEMBER 29 - OCTOBER 1
**SCAREFEEST HORROR AND
PARANORMAL CONVENTION**
Lexington, Kentucky
scarefeestcon.com

OCTOBER 18A
FEAR FETE
Bloom, Massachusetts
fearfete.com

OCTOBER 5 - 8
NEW YORK COMIC CON
New York City, New York
newyorkcomiccon.com

OCTOBER 6 - 8
WEEKEND OF HORRORS
Dachau, Germany
weekendofhorrors.com

OCTOBER 13 - 15
ROCK AND SHOCK
Worcester, Massachusetts
rockandshock.com

OCTOBER 27 - 29
**SPOOKY EMPIRE'S ULTIMATE
HORROR WEEKEND**
Orlando, Florida
spookyempire.com

NOVEMBER 18A
UK FESTIVAL OF ZOMBIE CULTURE
London, England
femofuk.com

NOVEMBER 4 - 5
MONSTERFESTMANIA
Akron, Ohio
monsterfestmania.com

FILM FESTIVALS

JANUARY 20 - 25
HORROR-ON-SEA FILM FESTIVAL
Torquay, England
horror-on-sea.com

JANUARY 26 - 29
GERARDMER INT'L FILM FESTIVAL
Gerardmer, France
festival-gerardmer.com

FEBRUARY 24 - 25
FRIGHTFEST GLASGOW
Glasgow, Scotland
frightfest.co.uk

FEBRUARY 24 - 26
NEWMORE FILM FESTIVAL
Durham, North Carolina
festivals.carolinatheatre.org/newmore

FEBRUARY 24 - MARCH 4
FANTASPORTO
Porto, Portugal
fantasporto.com

MARCH 18A
DRUNKEN ZOMBIE FILM FESTIVAL
Ponca, Illinois
drunkenzombiefilmfestival.com

MARCH 22 - 26
BOSTON UNDERGROUND
Cambridge, Massachusetts
bostonunderground.org

APRIL 18A
NIGHT VISIONS FILM FESTIVAL
Helsinki, Finland
nightvisions.info

APRIL 4 - 10
**BRUSSELS INT'L FANTASTIC FILM
FESTIVAL**
Brussels, Belgium
biff.net

APRIL 6 - 13
INT'L HORROR & SC-FI FESTIVAL
Phoenix, Arizona
terrormix.com

APRIL 12 - 22
IMAGINE FILM FESTIVAL
Amsterdam, Netherlands
imaginefestival.com

APRIL 15
SALT CITY HORROR FEST
Syracuse, New York
saltcityhorrorfest.com

APRIL 20 - 23
DEAD BY DAWN
Edinburgh, Scotland
deadbydawn.co.uk

APRIL 27 - 30
OVERLOOK FILM FESTIVAL
Mt. Hood, Oregon
overlookfilmfest.com

MAY 16 - 21
CRIMSON SCREEN
Charleston, South Carolina
crimsonscreenfilmfest.org

JUNE 6 - 10
PORTLAND HORROR FILM FESTIVAL
Portland, Oregon
portlandhorrorfilmfestival.com

JUNE 29 - JULY 2
FANTASTIC FILM SHOWCASE
Washington, D.C.
fantasticdc.com

JUNE 30 - JULY 8
NEUCHÂTEL INT'L FANTASTIC FILM FESTIVAL
Neuchâtel, Switzerland
niff.ch

JULY 10A
FANTAFESTIVAL
Rome, Italy
fanta-festival.it

JULY 5 - 8
CRYPTSHOW FESTIVAL
Barcelona, Spain
cryptshow.com

JULY 19 - 23
BUCHAREST INT'L FANTASTIC FILM FESTIVAL
Bucharest, South Korea
biffen.kr

JULY 13 - AUGUST 2
FANTASIA FILM FESTIVAL
Montreal, Ontario
fantasiafilmfest.com

AUGUST 24 - 28
FRIGHTFEST
London, England
frightfest.co.uk

SEPTEMBER 10A
FANTASTIC FEST
Austin, Texas
fantasticfest.com

SEPTEMBER 10A
L'ÉTRANGE FESTIVAL
Paris, France
etrangefestival.com

SEPTEMBER 10A
MOTELX: LISBON INT'L HORROR FILM FESTIVAL
Lisbon, Portugal
motelx.org

SEPTEMBER 10A
STRASBOURG EUROPEAN FANTASTIC FILM FESTIVAL
Strasbourg, France
strasbourgfilmfest.com

SEPTEMBER 7 - 17
MIDNIGHT MADNESS
(as part of the Toronto International Film Festival)
Toronto, Ontario
tiff.net

SEPTEMBER 8 - 10
HORRIBLE IMAGININGS
San Diego, California
hifilmfest.com

SEPTEMBER 21 - 23
FARGO FANTASTIC FILM FESTIVAL
Fargo, North Dakota
valleycon.com/filmfest.html

SEPTEMBER 26 - 30
SACRAMENTO HORROR FILM FESTIVAL
Sacramento, California
sachorrorfilmfest.com

OCTOBER 10A
BRAM STOKER INT'L FILM FESTIVAL
Whitby, England
bramstokerfilmfestival.com

OCTOBER 10A
BROOKLYN HORROR FILM FESTIVAL
Brooklyn, New York
brooklynhorrorfest.com

OCTOBER 10A
BUENOS AIRES ROJO SANGRE FILM FESTIVAL
Buenos Aires, Argentina
rojosangre.guestadriemovie.com

OCTOBER 10A
DIEDFEST
Edmonton, Alberta
diedfest.com

OCTOBER 10A
FREAKSHOW HORROR FILM FESTIVAL
Orlando, Florida
freakshowfilmfest.com

OCTOBER 10A
NIGHT VISIONS FILM FESTIVAL
Helsinki, Finland
nightvisions.fi/en

OCTOBER 10A
SAN ANTONIO HORRIFIC FILM FEST
San Antonio, Texas
horrificfilmfest.com

OCTOBER 10A
S-CREAMFEST
Los Angeles, California
screamfest.com

OCTOBER 10A
SHRIEKFEST
Los Angeles, California
shriekfest.com

OCTOBER 10A
SIGES FANTASTIC FILM FESTIVAL
Sigüenza, Spain
sigesfilmfestival.com

OCTOBER 10A
SOUTH AFRICAN HORROR FILM FEST
Geze Town, South Africa
horrorfestjohi

OCTOBER 10A
TORONTO AFTER DARK
Toronto, Ontario
torontoafterdark.com

OCTOBER 5 - 8
GRIMMFEST
Manchester, England
grimmfest.com

OCTOBER 5 - 8
SPOOKY MOVIE INT'L HORROR FILM FESTIVAL
Washington, D.C.
spookyfest.com

OCTOBER 6 - 8
H.P. LOVECRAFT FILM FESTIVAL & CTHULHUCON
Portland, Oregon
hplfilmfestival.com

OCTOBER 12 - 14
IDAH0 HORROR FILM FESTIVAL
Boise, Idaho
idahohorrorfilmfestival.org

OCTOBER 13 - 16
TELLURIDE HORROR SHOW
Telluride, Colorado
telluridehorrorshow.com

OCTOBER 16 - 22
FLICKERS
Providence, Rhode Island
film-festive.org/flickers.php

OCTOBER 20 - 22
ATLANTA HORROR FILM FESTIVAL
Atlanta, Georgia
atlantahorrorfilmfest.com

OCTOBER 20 - 22
KNOXVILLE HORROR FILM FEST
Knoxville, Tennessee
knoxvillehorrorfilmfest.com

OCTOBER 26
FRIGHTFEST HALLOWEEN
London, England
frightfest.co.uk

NOVEMBER 10A
A NIGHT OF HORROR INT'L FILM FESTIVAL
Sydney, Australia
anighthorror.com

NOVEMBER 10A
BURIED ALIVE FILM FEST
Atlanta, Georgia
buriedalivefilmfest.com

NOVEMBER 10A
HOUSECORE HORROR
San Antonio, Texas
housecorehorrorfilmfestival.com

NOVEMBER 10A
ITHICA FANTASTIK
Ithaca, New York
ithicafilmfestival.com

NOVEMBER 10A
MONSTER FEST
Melbourne, Australia
monsterfest.com.au

NOVEMBER 10A
MORBIDO FILM FEST
Patzcuaro, Mexico
morbidoefest.com

NOVEMBER 10A
YELLOW FEVER INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL
Belfast, Northern Ireland
theyff.ie/en/theyff

NOVEMBER 2 - 9
BUFFALO DREAMS FANTASTIC FILM FESTIVAL
Buffalo, New York
buffalodreamsfilmfest.com

OCTOBER 10A
PARIS INT'L FANTASTIC FILM FESTIVAL
Paris, France
piff.fr



ARKHAMBAZAAR.COM



WRITER/DIRECTOR M. NIGHT SHYAMALAN, PRODUCER JASON
BLUM AND STAR JAMES MCAVOY DELVE INTO THE TERROR OF
DISSOCIATIVE IDENTITY DISORDER WITH SPLIT

IN PIECES

DAVID GROVE





NIGHT SHYAMALAN'S CAREER HAS TAKEN AN UNEXPECTED TURN IN THE PAST TWO YEARS.

The writer-director, who seemed destined for a career in blockbusters after achieving commercial and critical triumph with the films *Signs* and *The Sixth Sense*, is now making low-budget horror films.

Before he reached the age of 35, he was hailed as the heir apparent to Steven Spielberg. Now in his mid-forties, Shyamalan is seeking redemption in a genre that has traditionally served as a launching pad for unknown filmmakers.

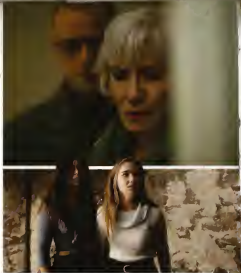
"I've enjoyed the process of making these low-budget films," he says, in a phone interview. "The best part of low-budget filmmaking is that I have absolute creative freedom, and I don't have the financial pressures I had with my previous films, because it's very easy for horror films, given their cost, to succeed financially. The challenge, of course, is having limited resources, sometimes no resources. I've always been prepared on all of my films, but on a low-budget film, you have to be super-prepared."

The results have been encouraging so far. Shyamalan's most recent film, 2015's *The Visit*, received an enthusiastic response from audiences and critics, some of whom credited him with a return to last form. Now, Shyamalan has re-teamed with the producer of *The Visit*, horror matriarch Jason Blum, for *Split*, a psychological horror film, based on the concept of multiple personalities.

"When we finished *The Visit*, I wasn't sure what Night was going to do next," says Blum, from the Blumhouse offices in Los Angeles. "As *The Visit* was set to be released, Night told me about the script for his next movie, *Split*, which he said was really out there. I loved what he was talking about."

Split, which was inspired by Shyamalan's long fascination with psychology, particularly the subject of dissociative identity disorder (DID), tells the story of Kevin (James McAvoy, of the *X-Men* franchise), an emotionally scarred man whose body holds more than twenty different personalities. Though he's seeking help from a therapist (played by Betty Buckley) he abducts three teenaged girls from a parking lot and imprisons them in a basement, where they meet the various personae of different ages, genders and temperaments. But the one they really have to fear is called "The Beast," who has plans for them. Being a Shyamalan film, further details are kept vague, as not to give away a presumed massive twist.

"I had the idea awhile," says the filmmaker. "I keep journals, which are filled with various ideas and scenes and tones for stories for potential film projects. I've always been intrigued by DID, how the brain works, and why people behave



Split The Beast: Haley Lu Richardson (top), Kevin (James McAvoy) (bottom left), and Kevin (James McAvoy) (bottom right).

the way they do. I also love *The Silence of the Lambs*, which is one of my favorite films."

To play Kevin, Shyamalan needed an extremely versatile actor who wasn't afraid of taking risks, including wearing a dress and lipstick as one of Kevin's female alter egos.

"It was an imposing role, and I know that I needed an actor who possessed a vast range and skill set," says Shyamalan, "who could have a squeaky voice in one scene, be a woman in another scene—someone who could change not only their voice throughout the film but also their physicality."

Joaquin Phoenix, who previously collaborated with Shyamalan on *Signs* and *The Village*, circled the role but dropped out. McAvoy was then cast after he and Shyamalan had a chance meeting at Comic-Con in 2015, where the actor was promoting the latest *X-Men* film.

"His hair was really short, down to maybe half an inch," recalls Shyamalan. "James is such a nice guy, and I don't think I would have considered him if I hadn't seen him with that look.

The base of niceness was there, and visible, but there was also the potential for adding layers to James. It was the kind of appearance that could be rearranged to fit many characters—his eyes, face, hair. He looked like he could be many different people, just with the way he looked, which was perfect for me."

McAvoy had long wanted to work with Shyamalan but was initially skittish about taking on such a bizarre role. Part of the reason was that the filmmaker told him very little about the script before giving it to him to look at.

"He asked me to read it with an open mind and prepare myself for something that was very different, something weird," recalls McAvoy, from his home in London, England. "When I read the script, I immediately recognized how demanding the role would be and how potentially disastrous it could be, and I just decided to embrace the weirdness of each of these characters, to go with it."

Although Kevin's body contains 24 personalities, only nine of them are actually showcased



Top: *Kevin Allen* in *To Fear Him*; Carey (Aye Taylor-Jay) tries to escape *Split* (see, and opposite) underdirector M. Night Shyamalan directs McKay

in *Split*. Complicating things was the fact that the "real" Kevin only has about a minute-and-a-half of screen time. McKay says that he decided early on that he couldn't play Kevin *per se*, but rather he had to play nine distinct roles.

"It was my job, as an actor, to figure out who these personalities were and what they meant to Kevin in his life," he says. "His multiple personalities were born out of a horrible childhood and the hate and trauma he received from his mother in particular. Kevin's childhood was full of abuse and trauma. The personalities started to develop when he was a small child, and as he got older, they helped him cope with everything that was happening around him. 'Dennis' arrived when he was three or four, and 'Patricia' arrived when he was ten or eleven, and it continued from there. Kevin serves as a host body for this community of personalities that now control him."

For McKay, the biggest challenge was keeping track of who he was playing at any given moment. He describes them as being in a "prison" while trapped inside Kevin, who is actively trying to get rid of them, thereby agitating them further.

"Some of the personalities are fully formed and some aren't," states McKay. "Some have a broad bandwidth, and some have a narrow bandwidth. All of these different personalities—beginning with 'Dennis,' followed by 'Barry,' 'Hedwig' and 'Patricia'—came along to save Kevin at different points in his life, and now, in the film, the personalities are being marginalized and pushed aside, which makes some of them hostile."

With its multiple personality storylines, combined with the elements of child abuse, cross-dressing and violence, comparisons to *Psycho* are inevitable, not to mention Brian De Palma's multiple-personality-based films: *Dressed to Kill*, *Reinventing Glen and Sisters*.

"It has elements of the Brian De Palma films and of *The Sixth Sense*," points out Blum. "It is a bit supernatural thriller. The supernatural element feels very organic."

Although Shyamalan, who is a lifelong devotee of Alfred Hitchcock, acknowledges the influence of *Psycho*, he insists that the similarities between it and *Split* are minor.

"Of course I was influenced by Hitchcock and *Psycho*," he admits. "I especially love the black humor in *Psycho*, in all of Hitchcock's

films, which is an element I try to include in all of my films. However, I wanted to break genres with *Split*. I want the audience to have a fun, scary, tense experience when they watch the film, but I also want them to have a sense of understanding for what Kevin is going through. I want them to feel empathy for him."

Stylistically, Shyamalan says that the movie was influenced by the films of Robert Altman and David Lynch.

"Primarily *Blue Velvet*, which is so daring in terms of the approach Lynch took," he says. "Stylistically, visually, I brought a world cinema approach to *Split* in terms of frame, I was influenced by a Greek film called *Dogtooth* (a 2009 dramatic thriller about teens forced to live in isolation by their parents), as well as a film called *Caché* (a 2005 Michael Haneke movie about a couple threatened by a series of videotapes left on their doorstep), which is a great psychological thriller from France. I guess you could say that *Split* has a French feel and look. I wanted to create suspense and tension. I want this to feel epic and intense."

Split is, at its core, a horror film, which explains the arrival of Kevin's 24th and most dominant personality, The Beast. He's the police figure to the other personalities and controls them.

"[He] teaches them that they're beautiful and special, and that it's the world around them that is impure and sick," explains McKay. "He teaches them that not only are they normal, they're hyper normal, and that they don't have



to live underground anytime, they don't have to settle for being a janitor at 37 years old. The Beast pushes Dennis to punish everyone he sees who's impure, which leads to the kidnapping of the three girls."

It makes for a fascinating struggle within Kevin. There's always tension as different personalities relate to The Beast in different ways and grapple with the way that he's also imprisoned them.

"Dennis is kind of the heavy, and he turns into the Beast's henchman," offers McVey as an example. "There's tension within the [personalities] community over this. Patricia has a feminine connection with the girls and bonds with them. 'Hedwig' has a juvenile attraction to one of the girls."

Led by the resourceful and strong-willed Casey (The Witch's Anya Taylor-Joy), the girls try to escape their predicament by exploiting Kevin's condition to their advantage. They also realize that they're doomed if they can't escape before their overtaken selves.

"The different personalities talk to the girls about the Beast, and the girls realize that if they meet the Beast, they're all going to be killed," says Shyamalan. "The personalities describe the Beast as this incredible force, a powerful figure, and that he's coming, and there's a real sense of dread about the Beast. When is he going to appear?"

McVey puts it more succinctly: "The basement is a bestial environment—it's a claustrophobic, sad space."

Shyamalan imagined Kevin's house as a window into his troubled soul. Constructed on a soundstage in Pennsylvania (the filmmaker shot the film in his native state in the fall of 2015), it has a utilitarian look to it.

"It doesn't look like a basement, and when you see it, you wonder what kind of person built this place, and why anyone would want to live there," says Shyamalan. "There are flowers. There are shards of beauty and normalcy in the house, but there's also chaos. It's a picture of confusion and pain. Where the hell are we?"

Even more intriguing is the supernatural element of *Split*, which is connected to Kevin's belief that he can change his body chemistry, can shape-shift, through his different personalities. Shyamalan believes that DID patients are in fact capable of altering themselves physically by changing their body chemistry.

"It's about believing you're someone else, first of all, and then pretending that you have certain abilities and can do things that you ordinarily wouldn't be capable of doing," he says. "A DID patient, for example, might believe that they're a great athlete, or incredibly strong, and there have been cases where DID patients have performed incredible feats of strength, which they would never be able to do ordinarily. What



THE GIRLS REALIZE THAT IF THEY MEET THE BEAST, THEY'RE ALL GOING TO BE KILLED. 7

—M. NIGHT SHYAMALAN

if a DID patient, if Kevin's personalities, believed that they possessed supernatural powers? That's the premise I started with."

McVey also did extensive research into DID and multiple personalities. He agrees that DID is real and patients like Kevin have genuine symptoms. Often they manifest in complex ways, as he points out.

"What I learned is that some DID patients keep diaries, with one alter ego writing to another alter ego, keeping in contact with each other, in order to keep track of the different parts of their lives. Kevin is a sweet soul at heart. Some of these personalities are actually very entertaining, nice people to be around, and some aren't."

Having the crux of the drama internalized and what is essentially an ensemble cast primarily played by one actor, the concept of *Split* is perfect for the (most) one location [Lumbago] formula. The question is, will Shyamalan continue making low-budget horror films after *Split*?

He says that wants to see how *Split* is received, commercially and critically, before he looks ahead. Blum, however, is much more certain that the director is well-suited to make the

transition to low-budget horror filmmaking. Of course, given that *The Visit* took in nearly \$100 million worldwide on a \$5 million budget, it's no surprise he'd feel that way.

"Night's always been an outsider," says Blum. "He doesn't live in LA, and he keeps the same crew with him, which has allowed him to adapt very comfortably to that independent, low-budget mentality. *Split* has a beautiful, classical look to it, and the visuals are very composed. Night always storyboard[s] everything. He draws the entire film, and he works off of that, and I think that approach would serve him well on any film, big or small."

(All the process of making *Split* wasn't easy. Shyamalan says that the film's production was far more stressful than the making of *The Visit*.)

"There were days when I didn't think we were going to make it," he reveals. "It seemed like we were filming an iconic scene every day—every day we were introducing another personality. These are iconic moments, and they had to be done right.... When we finished filming one of the scenes, the entire crew applauded. I'll always remember that."

PAUL W.S. ANDERSON PROMISES HIS FINAL INSTALLMENT
IN THE RESIDENT EVIL ZOMBIE SAGA IS GOING OUT WITH
NOT JUST A BANG, BUT MORE SCARES TOO

GOIN' DOWN TO RECON CITY

BY MICHAEL GINGOLD

HORROR AUDIENCES HAVE BEEN TRICKED BY ALLEGED FINAL CHAPTERS BEFORE, but Paul W.S. Anderson promises that the latest in his *Resident Evil* franchise is its real-deal conclusion.

"This is not Chen's Farewell Tour!" he says with a laugh. Instead, it's a farewell to Alice, the lacker of zombie ass now played for the sixth time by Milla Jovovich. *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter* (opening January 27 from Screen Gems) is the endgame that Anderson says he's had at least partially in mind from the start of the series, adapted from the popular survival horror video game franchise spawned in the mid-'90s.

"There are ideas incorporated in this that I had when we made the first movie," he says. "And of course, who knew back then that this would become such a long-running franchise? We didn't even get American distribution for the original until halfway through the shoot; now we have a big, giant studio behind us, which is way nice! But there were ideas I had at that time that I thought I'd use if I was lucky enough to create a series, and be able to tell the end story I wanted to."

Final Chapter returns the tale to where it all started: Raccoon City, home of the sinister Umbrella Corporation that unleashed the global zombie

plague. After the events of *Resident Evil: Retribution*, in which Alice (Milla Jovovich) is the only survivor of the backstabbing Albert Wesker (Shawn Roberts), she gathers her own team to save the city's remaining survivors, who he's targeting with his army of zombies, monsters and mutants.

"The interesting thing about her is that she's a woman with memory loss, so our protagonist doesn't really know who she is, she's not sure of the truth about herself, and that's what this movie addresses," explains Anderson. "It's a journey of discovery for Alice about her identity, what her purpose is, the truth about the Umbrella Corporation and the Red Queen."

As Alice embarks on that voyage, Anderson says the trip will hold surprises for followers of both the films and the video games they're based on, including further revelations about the Umbrella Corporation. The film will feature both new horrors and some familiar ones unleashed by Umbrella in the past.

"We do have some creatures from the game," says Anderson. "Like the Popokurimu, the big flying dragon creature, we just call it 'the dragon,' because the other names is way too long to pronounce! There's a big, huge scene with Milla in Washington D.C. with this monster. There's also Bloodshot, which I feel is the best creature from the last game, and is repulsive and horrible in the best



possible way."

The tone of the movie will also partially shift back to that of the first film, from 2002:

"That had a real claustrophobic intensity," says Anderson, "because it was set in this underground facility, and as the franchise has gone along, it has become more associated with big action. In this one, we have both."

Taking this approach led to a change in the way he shot *The Final Chapter* as well. Anderson, who calls himself "an early adopter" of 3-D, has previously helmed four films utilizing the process, starting with 2010's *Resident Evil: Afterlife*, which was shot on the same cameras that were used for *Avatar* (2009). He subsequently shot *The Three Musketeers*, *Resident Evil: Retribution* and *Pompeii* with the rigs, but this time he's chosen to set some of the mayhem in tight, oppressive spaces left him no choice but to film *The Final Chapter* in 2-D for convenience in post.

"If you've been on a native 3-D set, you know the cameras are big, and you can't get them in a room like this," he says, gesturing at the small backroom space in Madison Square Gardens where this interview is taking place, as part of New York Comic Con. "In *Final Chapter*, I wanted to have fights in rooms like this, since the claustrophobia is very important to the film."

Afterlife was not only Anderson's midlife foray into this cinematic, it marked his return to the helm of the *Resident Evil* franchise after handing the reins of *Apocalypse* (2004) and *Extinction* (2007) to Alexander Witt and Russell Mulcahy, respectively. Anderson says he would be happily directed all the *Resident Evil* movies but these decisions aren't always up to him.

"I had a commitment to do *Alien vs. Predator* at 20th Century Fox at the same time Sony wanted another *Resident Evil* movie, and of course, Fox doesn't give a damn what Sony wants and vice versa. The same occurred with the third movie and *Death Race* I've always been around as writer and producer, and for *Extinction*, I was on the set all the time."

One constant throughout *Resident Evil*'s history has been its hard R-rating, even back in 2002, when the first film was made and that tag was out of fashion. But Anderson stuck to his guns, so to speak.

"There was pressure to do the first film as a PG-13, because at that time, Hollywood was very anti-R," he recalls. "After Columbia, studios were being taken to task about marketing violent movies to young people, and they were saying, 'We, so, so, we don't do that, we're nice people, we make friendly movies!' But I couldn't stay true to the source material and do a successful *Resident Evil* movie as a PG-13. I couldn't have had the laser combat with people eating chopped up, people being eaten alive. It's *Resident Evil*, you know? So we persevered and made it as an R, and fortunately we succeeded. Then, once it had worked and the studio



Alien Doesn't She Have Any More? Alice (Jovovich) is back in the role of Resident Evil's "strongest being of the modern era" in the final chapter of the franchise.

saw there was an audience for it, we stayed with the R rating, and there was never any question about continuing with that."

As the years went on, however, *Resident Evil* faced growing competition on the zombie/action front. The two subsequent years saw the successful releases of *28 Days Later* and the *Dawn of the Dead* remake, and the stakes kept getting raised from there, culminating with the blockbuster *World War Z* in 2013.

"We've had to up our game with every [*Resident Evil*] movie," Anderson acknowledges, "and I was very aware of that with this film, which is why I changed things up. We went to Africa, we shot on these incredible locations. On the last movie, the look was very stylized, very science fiction, and as a kind of reaction against that, to give something fresh to the audience, the *Final Chapter* has a dirty, gritty realism to it. There's no slow-motion in the film, and the action is super-intense."

One other element has remained a constant from the start: Jovovich, Anderson's onscreen star and wife since 2009.

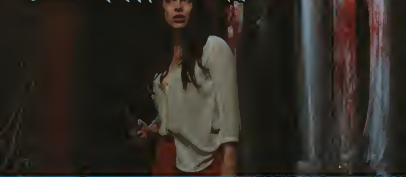
"Any director who gets to work with Milla is very lucky," he says. "She's a truly supportive actress, she works hard, she's very director-friendly. She does all her own stunts, she's very, very committed."

Their collaboration has grown over the course of the *Resident Evil* series, with Jovovich contributing to the screenplays as well. That's particularly true of *Final Chapter*.

"[T]his movie has an emotional component that most people won't associate with *Resident Evil*, and Milla had a lot to bring to the table in terms of that," notes Anderson. "Even as a British person, with the stiff upper lip and all that sort of thing, I got quite heavy at the end of this film, the conclusion of Alice's journey, and realizing the truth about her. It's pretty moving stuff."

CINEMA

FILM • DVD • REISSUES



THE CHILLING FLOOR

ABATTOIR

Starring Jessica Lowndes, Joe Anderson and Lin Shaye
Written by Christopher Morfitt
Directed by Doris Lynn Boussais
Mammoth Pictures

After contributing three perfectly adequate sequels to the *Saw* franchise, the spirited splatterpunk musical *Rope! The Genetic Opera* and a serviceable remake of *Mother's Day*, one could be forgiven for failing to raise their expectations in anticipation of Doris Lynn Boussais' latest. Be that as it may, this writer is happy to report that — despite some bungled scenes and sluggish pacing — *Abattoir* is the filmmaker's best effort to date.

Derived from an unpublished graphic novel, the story concerns Julia Tolben (Jessica Lowndes), a mid-estate journalist who longs to work LA's crime beat. After her sister, brother-in-law and nephew are brutally slain in their own home she gets her chance and begins investigating the case. Revisiting the scene, Julia discovers the murder room has been physically extracted from the property, something that has occurred

at previous homicide locations over several decades. Teaming up with her ex-lover Detective Declan Grady (Joe Anderson), Julia follows an unlikely trail to the Louisiana town of New English, home to a scant assortment of locals and crops.

Presiding over the locals is former preacher Jeremiah Crane (Dayton Callie), whom Julia learns has been removing the sites where heinous acts of fatal violence have been perpetrated only to reconstruct them in a composite slaughterhouse. Crane offers Julia a choice: the puddy reporter can leave with the biggest scoop of her middling career, or she can enter his labyrinthine abode — where every room, hallway and staircase is stalked by its own grim spirit — to be reunited with her recently departed loved ones and learn the truth of who she really is.

Whilst hardly redefining the haunted house film, *Abattoir* is nevertheless artfully directed with Boussais displaying a rich morose look that lends the industrial ghost town an appropriately atmospheric cheerlessness. Neither this, nor Callie's steady performance as the silver-tongued collector of souls is enough to

completely remedy the turgidity of Christopher Morfitt's script, which parcels out motivation and back story in front blocks of condescending dialogue. The tale only truly sparkles to life during the third act tour of Crane's "house of a thousand tragedies," but by then, the parade of CGI apparitions in all their howling glory should satisfy most viewers.

MICHAEL DOYLE

GHOSTS OF WAR

UNDER THE SHADOW

Starring Narges Fardesh, Aven Marshad and Bobby Naderi
Written and directed by Babak Anvari
XYZ Films

It is a common assertion that some of the most meaningful horror films come from rendering heinous realities into monsters. Within a war-torn post-revolutionary Iran, like writer/director Babak Anvari's inspiration, a home in the city of Tehran in the 1980s, with a mother named Shideh (Narges Fardesh), a father named Inaj (Bobby Naderi) and their daughter Daria (Aven Marshad), Shideh is a former medical student expelled from



her program due to her involvement with leftist protest groups, and this is a doctor called to help the cause in Iran, where most of the fighting is taking place. After he leaves, a missile strikes their building and decimates the top floor. Subsequently, Bone begins to act erotically; she can't sleep, she's acting out, and she's become unusually attached to her doll. When it goes missing, she says that a Djinn has taken it and is tormenting her. Shieh initially writes it off as a fantasy brought on by stress. But at a certain point, she must listen to the desperate pleading of her child, and confront the evil being tearing apart her home.

Without its supernatural elements, *Under the Shadow* would still be a frightening movie. There's a palpable unease from start to finish, especially during the nail-biting sequences when everyone in the apartment complex must run to the basement during air raids. It's immediately apparent how hard-shelled the parents must be in order to adapt and survive, particularly Shieh, as the film quickly focuses on her. Between being caught in the political upheaval, having to pursue her medical studies to help her family, and constantly struggling to keep her daughter safe, she's a hybrid of fascinatingly unrelatable hero.

Where *Anwar's* film falls short is in its reliance on jump-scares, which cheapens a story that already provides a wealth of horrors, especially considering he's so effectively subtle in planting his characters. If the movie didn't get bogged down by shadowy beads jumping out of the darkness occasionally, it would be impenetrable. Regardless, *Under the Shadow* is powerful storytelling in the way it blends us with the reality of its world.

RICHIELE CHARLOT

SLASHBACK TO THE '80S

LAKE NOWHERE

Starring Wren Blyden, Zoë Kazan
and Nathan Andrew Wood
Directed by Christopher Phelps and Mason Van Scay
Written by Bryan Scott Fitzgerald, Christopher Phelps
and Stephen Phelps
Distributors

Back in 2008, Ti West released *The House of the Devil*, his attempt to replicate the look and feel of a 1980s horror movie. Though West probably had no idea at the time, he was firing the opening salvo in what would soon become something of a minor battle in the horror world: who could best recreate not just the aesthetics, but the experience of watching a rented fright flick on a crummy VHS? The latest effort, Christopher Phelps' and Mason Van Scay's *Lake Nowhere* isn't quite the masterpiece of the



Lake Nowhere

subgenre, but it comes very close.

A group of friends arrive at a lakeside cabin to indulge in a bit of summertime hedonism, only to be set upon by a nameless, faceless killer

who begins picking them off one by one in grisly sex-y-death set pieces. To Phelps and Van Scay's credit, that's about all there is to the movie — taking a cue from the classic slashers, there's no attempt to engage in the sort of postmodern social commentary or trope subversion that would date *Nowhere* as a contemporary flick. Combined with the shot-on-video look — in terms of film stock aesthetics, *Nowhere* definitely

wins the contest, though several characters wear distinctly modern eyeglasses — the movie comes incredibly close to looking like a genuine time-capsule piece. Unfortunately, the duo falls into the same trap that West did by being a little too polished for their own good. Everyone who loves old slashers must admit that they weren't the best-middle-aged intelligent movies ever produced, but there are times that *Nowhere* is just a little too good to masquerade as a legitimate '80s teacher. Minute-long sequences that take place in almost total silence lend it an eerie, meditative feeling when it's clearly meant to be tongue-in-cheek. In particular, the sequence leading up to the first murder — which cross-cuts between a game of cards, a vigorous balling session and the approach of the killer — is inconspicuously tense and beautifully filmed, and belongs in a more serious movie.

Lake Nowhere is preceded by a pair of take-trailers, neither of which capture the aesthetics of the late '70s/early '80s in quite the same way as the main attraction, and don't adequately prepare the viewer for the experience of the film. Regardless, nostalgia freaks and retro-horror fans are sure to find this a fun way to kill an hour

PRESTON FASSEL

THERE'S A KILLER ON THE ROAD

THE MONSTER

Starring Ella Ballarín, Zoë Kazan and Aaron Douglas
Written and directed by Bryan Scarbo
Distributors: Phobos

Edwin Rolfe and Lester Fuller would not have been very good at marketing modern horror movies. Not that they should be. After all, they were the writers of the 1946 murder mystery *Murder in the Glass Room*, in which they coined the phrase "You can never tell a book by its cover." In this day and age, however, when horror fans are deluged with more releases than they can ever watch, you should be able to tell a lot about a movie by its cover. And that's a very roundabout way of saying that *The Monster* — a movie with a forgettable title and innocuous poster — probably won't get the attention it deserves.

A polished little creature feature written and directed by Bryan Scarbo, who also wrote and directed *The Shrinkers*, it follows waste-case trailer park mom Kathy (Zoë Kazan) as she drives her daughter, Lucy (Ella Ballarín), to her father's house. The tense road trip takes a turn for the much worse when they hit a wolf and get stranded at night in a rainstorm. Seems the animal was being pursued by a big, toothy creature that turns its attention to the promise of mother-daughter morsels. A tow-truck driver serves as a suitable appetizer while also giving our heroes a possible escape vehicle. But it's not gonna be that easy, of course.

Young Lizzy will have to be resourceful and





OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE DUCKS DOWN UNDER

CHOP 'TIL YOU DROP



LEGEND OF THE HILLBILLY BUTCHER

MVD Visual

Maybe it's the nightmares about zombie Colonel Sanders, but here's something about the American South that makes me cringe. Nevertheless, I've decided to face my fears by watching three movies set down yonder. This first one revolves around Carl Jessup, better known locally as the *Hillbilly Butcher*. It seems that Carl's dad killed his wife and then committed suicide, passing on the family business to Carl who now hunts trespassers on his property to turn into ground round. Sounds promising, so it's a shame the director flocked with *Legend of the Hillbilly Butcher* by giving it a faux retro, faded, scratchy look so distracting and ugly, it'd make a bright train take a dirt road.

BODY COUNT: 12

WORST WAY TO DIE: Whacked while shitting in the woods

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT



IN THE HELL OF DIXIE

Independent Entertainment

You can't get much further south than Louisiana, where in *The Hell of Dixie* takes place. It features a bunch of guys at their loops discussing all the odd heinous talk about while pretending they're sportsmen and not cowardly killers. Usually I applaud when the heinous end up being the ones stalked and killed by some psychopaths, but there's too much other stuff going on here as the murderer offs everyone from the misleading side stories that permeate this film like herbs in an outburst. Featuring a cast that's better at chewing tobacco than acting and a murky soundtrack, the worst part about it is that at 127 minutes, it's about 126 minutes too fucking long!

BODY COUNT: 16

WORST WAY TO DIE: Shot in the head by a guy on the toilet

HAIR RAISIN'



BUBBA THE REDNECK WEREWOLF

MVD Visual

Dan's y'all worry because I dun' care 'ol' sired the best for last! In *Bubba the Redneck Werewolf*, Bubba is the local loser — he's lost the town's respect, he lost his best girl and he's even losing his hair — but everything changes when the Devil offers to turn him into a werewolf so he can get his girl back and grow back a full coat. Because he's got a heart of gold he decides to go up against Satan to try to help all the townsfolk overtake off of their souls. Banned by said witch, sharp writing, some great gore and a soundtrack that'll have you humming the theme song for days — this one's definitely the pick of the litter. Yee-hawking how!

BODY COUNT: 19

WORST WAY TO DIE: Falling off a stepladder

LAST LANCE LANCE

Kelly will have to kick-start her maternal instincts if there's any hope against the bawny beast. Kazin and Balentine keep us invested, even when the script needlessly descends into the depths of maudlin towards the climax.

Staying focused on two people trying to survive on a backroad, *The Monster* is an economical film in both its straight-ahead story, and in the way it obscures its titular practical effect in the shadows and rain.

There's nothing new here, but *The Monster* is more exciting than its bland monster and marketing materials, mostly because the drooling, toothy, Alee-naped critter is frightening. When it comes to creature features, go ahead, judge a movie by its monster.

DAVE ALEXANDER

...IS MURDER

MEAT

Starring: Elias Mouton, Kelly Benner and Hugo Weisser
Directed by Victor Muevenhuys and Mortege Seyferth
Written by Mortege Seyferth and Silas Laporta
Art: Poliphatus

The opening shot in 2010's *Meat* is an image of three upside-down, linked, headless female torsos with "MEAT" superimposed over them. Subtle! While the Dutch directorial team of Victor Muevenhuys and Mortege Seyferth appears to make a statement about the similarities between cannibalistic diets and sexual appetites, the film never really achieves that goal.

That said, *Meat* is an aptly titled film, there are so many intense close-ups at raw animal carcasses being sliced that it does feel like an advertisement for the Dutch farming industry.

The film follows two non-linear narratives: one is focused on a butcher (Elias Mouton), who has sex with a prostitute but quits after his younger co-worker Romy (Kelly Benner), while the other follows Inspector Morn (also played by Mouton), who breaks up with his suicidal wife and eventually investigates the murder of the butcher.

Does it sound confusing yet? Muevenhuys' double role seems to imply that the inspector and the butcher are both involved with the business of dead flesh but because all of the characters in the film are unlikable and/or incredible, it's difficult to care. Romy is the most sympathetic she's manipulated by the butcher into a sexual relationship and raped by several men, but the only thing she seems interested in is documenting everything around her on a hand-held video camera.

Despite the confusing plot, *Meat* is a gorgeous film, Muevenhuys' cinematography frames everything in stark lines and angles, an intriguing contrast to the perpetually enigmatic subject matter. Perhaps if the narrative were more engaging, the film's central thesis — that the consumption of human and animal flesh is interchangeable — would have successfully come to life on the screen. As it is, *Meat*'s just a good-looking corpse.

LESS LES MOORE



ROGER CORMAN GETS US REVVED UP ABOUT **DEATH RACE 2050**, HIS OWN REMAKE OF THE 1975 CAR-WRAGE CLASSIC

DANGEROUS DRIVING

BY PRESTON FARNSLI



I F ONE FILM HAD TO BE CHOSEN FROM LEGENDARY PRODUCER ROGER CORMAN'S LUSTY CV AS THE MOST IMPORTANT OR INFLUENTIAL, there's a strong argument to be made for Paul Bartel's *Death Race 2000*, about an annual event in which condemned racers (including David Carradine and Sylvester Stallone) attempt to kill each other and innocent bystanders in the name of national TV entertainment. Released at a time when Americans were anxious about the future of their country, it became a cult phenomenon. The current political climate has made it ripe for a remake, and Corman answered the call with *Death Race 2050*. Directed by G.J. Echternkamp and starring Maria Bennett and Malcolm McDowell as a Trump-like "Chairman," the film — out this month on home video from Universal — promises a return to the original's roots with a heavy dose of political satire, updating the setting to the future of today. Corman gives us a peek under the hood.

WHAT WAS IT ABOUT *DEATH RACE 2000* THAT CAPTURED PEOPLE'S IMAGINATIONS?

One of the things that made *Death Race* unique was the fact that it was a futuristic road-racing picture, from New York to New Los Angeles. The drivers were scored on how fast they could drive, how many other cars they could drive off the road, and how many pedestrians they could kill. That's really what made the picture unusual and engaging, and led to all kinds of jokes like "twenty points for the little old lady in the crosswalk," and so forth. And because of the killing of the pedestrians, it introduced humor, so it became sort of a car racing black comedy. Also, it was a very complex film, as is the new one. It had a certain amount of political commentary.

THE MOVIE WAS REMADE AS *DEATH RACE* BY PAUL W.S. ANDERSON IN 2008, AND THAT WAS A COUPLE OF SEQUELS. WHY A REMAKE NOW? I sold the remake rights to Universal. They remake it very well a number of times, but they took out the killing of the pedestrians. It was a straight action picture. I was being interviewed by an Italian journalist, and he was talking about the killing of the pedestrians and society and talking about how *The Hunger Games* was almost the same story. I don't think *The Hun-*

ger Games took its story from *Death Race*, but it was very similar. And I thought about all of this, and I called Universal and... had a very good discussion with them, and they asked me if I'd like to remake it again myself, in the future of today's world. And I said I'd be delighted to, because the world has changed in some respects, but in other respects it stays the same.

HOW HAS THIS VERSION BEEN UPDATED?

It's changed primarily through special effects. [Originally] all of the racing was done realistically, it was just there. You had the cars, you had the drivers, and they did the stunts. Today, we did the same thing but we augmented it with computer graphics, green screen shots and a number of other special effects. So the racing is more spectacular today than in the original.



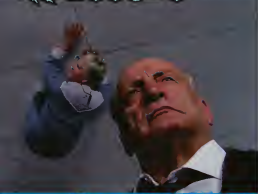
WHAT ABOUT THE SOCIAL COMMENTARY THEN?

First and foremost, it's a car racing action film, which is what the audience would come to see. It also has some black humor in it. But, through the killing of the pedestrians and the portrayal of the society, I wanted people to see, subliminally as it were, a possible road to the future. What might happen, for instance, if the United States of America becomes the United Corporations of America, and the President is no longer the President, he's the Chairman of the Board. And the Chairman is a smiling, dictatorial man who speaks/attacks people in various ways and actually has a honest remembrance of one of our most prominent politicians of today. I was trying to say, "Here is a possible way the world might go."

NOW DOES THE FILM REFLECT THE CHANGES IN SOCIETY SINCE THE ORIGINAL VERSION WAS RELEASED?

I think many people were a little bit more optimistic about the future. And I think at least I am a little bit more pessimistic now, and the possibility of an oligarch society with a small, rich class, and a majority of the people poor is a little more possible today. So, it reflects a slightly darker outlook.

REISSUES



UNKINDEST CUTS

THE EXORCIST III (1990) *Video*

Starring George C. Scott, Brad Dourst and Ed Flanders
Written and directed by William Peter Blatty
Scream Factory

There's been an image from *The Exorcist III* floating around online for years of a priest with his own head in his lap. It's shocking, gory and not in the finished film – a premonition shot released before the theatrical cut of the movie was locked, presumably censored for being too graphic. It's the scene's delectable bits of the film have clamoured for Alas, it's nowhere to be seen in Scream Factory's special edition Blu-ray of *ENI*, as either part of the deleted scenes or on the second disc containing the director's cut. That's not to say Scream Factory's Blu-ray special edition isn't a must-own, however.

Considered by many to be the real sequel to *The Exorcist* (part two is an embarrassing debacle), the 1980 release is a modern horror masterpiece. Written and directed by original

Exorcist novelist William Peter Blatty, it picks up fifteen years after the peat-spewing events in Georgetown. George C. Scott is Lt. Kinderman (played by J. Lee Cobb in the first film), who's investigating a rash of heinous murders that match the M.O. of the executed Gemini Killer. Seems he's somehow returned and is picking off people connected to the possession that took the life of Father Karras (Jason Miller). Kinderman traces the murders back to a mysterious patient locked in a padded cell, who sometimes appears as Karras and other times the cold serial killer (played by Brad Dourst).

Blatty's original cut featured only Dourst in the role, and a much different, quieter ending, but Warner Brothers forced the filmmaker to reshoot part of the project with Miller (we learn that Old Scratch resurrected Karras as a cruel joke to use his body as a vengeful vessel for a sadistic murderer), and add a flashy exorcism at the end.

The only footage available to reconstruct Blatty's version is degraded video, so it's a jarring edit. The best version of the story probably lies between the two cuts, as the exorcism is both exciting but overcooked, and there's a grates

to having Miller return, though Dourst completely owns the role.

Decide for yourself via a wealth of exceptional testaments from Red Shirt Pictures, covering the atmospheric score, incredible practical effects, the leads' exceptionally intense performances, the difficult reshoot and more. Plus, there's a new, 107-minute audio interview with Blatty. Add the extras from previous releases, and *The Exorcist III* special edition is an unholy terror.

DAVE ALEXANDER

CHAMBERS OF HORROR

RABID (1977) *Video*

Starring Marilyn Chambers, Frank Moore and Joe Silver
Written and directed by David Cronenberg
Scream Factory

After his attention-grabbing debut with *Shivers*, David Cronenberg didn't let a violent critic's attack on both the movie and its government-subsidy financing get in the way of a follow-up. *Rabid* once again tells of unorthodox science resulting in a plague of violent behaviour, bordering the scale and scope from a single apartment tower to the entire city of Montreal. The focus here is on the Typhoid Mary of the outbreak, a young woman named Rose (Marilyn Chambers) who first spreads the disease via a warped, hermaphroditic organ located under one arm.

Chambers was the choice of *Rabid*'s producers – including a pre-*Ghostbusters* Ivan Reitman – in no small part due to her adult-film notoriety, while Cronenberg wanted to cast Betsy Spang. (He has Chambers walk past a *Came* poster of one point.) Chambers acquires herself quite well, however, and *Rabid* also features impressively staged public mayhem and car/break stunts for its low budget. And now, thanks to the Scream Factory Blu-ray, the film has been given an absolutely first-rate

home-video showcase. This 40-year-old independent production looks remarkably good here, with excellent colours and perfect image density in the 1.66:1 transfer.

A batch of bonus features have been perked over from various other releases, most significantly an excellent, wide-ranging audio commentary by Cronenberg that's an absolute must-listen. A second talk track by author and Cronenberg scholar William Baird is also worthwhile, going in depth into *Rabid* and its place in both Cronenberg's filmography and Canadian cinema in general. And then there's a third commentary, listing for the movie's last hour, which intricately details Chambers' career



in porn cinema and beyond.

Other previously existing extras on view here are an on-camera Cronenberg interview providing more background on Robt interviews with producers Reitman and Don Carmody, both of whom deliver excellent anecdotes; and Caelum Vortec's highly entertaining *From Stereo to Video*, a visual cast history chronicling Cronenberg's early career. New to this disc is a lengthy interview with co-star Susan Roman, an engaging speaker who recalls everything from collaborating with Chambers to the financing controversy that dogged the film. It's a reassurance that'll have you drooling madly for sure.

MICHAEL OMSOLO

CRUELTY

BLACK CHRISTMAS (1974) Blu-ray

Starring Olivia Hussey, Keith Dallas and John Saxon
Directed by Bob Clark
Written by Roy MacKenzie
Screenplay by

There's a tendency in discussing the horror classics to emphasize those with a degree of the fantastic. The *Exorcist* is generally regarded as one of the perennial "best ever," as are *Halloween* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Their inarguable greatness aside, there's perhaps a degree of safety in admiring films that give us insulation from reality. Some may feature human antagonists, but there's usually an otherworldly element to *Leatherface* and Michael acting as a buffer. Maybe that's why *Black Christmas* remains firmly enmeshed in "cult" territory. While undoubtedly one of the most terrifying films ever made, it's also far too real for a lot of folk's comfort.

It's December, and the sisters of a Canadian sorority house have several reasons not to be fazed with yuletide cheer. For one, they're inundated with increasingly disturbing phone calls from an anonymous stalker (Nick Mancuso in the most soul-chilling voice-over ever recorded). For another, it seems gets keep disappearing. True, several were scheduled to go home for the holidays, but the abruptness of their "departures" has Jess Bradford (Olivia Hussey) convinced that the caller is more than just an ominous pervert. As the body count rises, the stage is set for a final confrontation between Jess and the man on the phone.

While it certainly isn't afraid to dale out blood, the film's strength lies in the excruciating campaign of psychological warfare it wages on the audience, ratcheting up the tension in tortuously subtle increments until the final, nightmarish sequence. Effectively, *Black Christmas* perfectly simulates the experience of

being phone-stalked, right up to the unthinkable conclusion of that scenario.

Just last year, Anchor Bay released a "definitive" special edition (in Canada), featuring a plethora of extras plus a mini-issue of *Roe Mague* commemorating the film. It's to *Scream Factory's* credit that they haven't attempted to improve that edition, but rather augmented it. All the special features are still here, with the real centrepiece being a brand-new 2K restoration of the film, sharpening the picture while leaving the grainy aesthetic and noise that audiences would've seen in

the original release, and which serves so well to add to the film's sense of spiritual uncleanness. Consider it the gift that keeps on creeping.

FRISBORN FASSEL

KING CAMPBELL

BUBBA HO-TEP (2002) Blu-ray

Starring Bruce Campbell, David Davis and Eli Jayce
Written and directed by Don Coscarelli
Screenplay by

The best thing to be said about Don Coscarelli's *Bubba Ho-Tep* is that it's utterly unique in the horror/drama pantheon. Appropriately, that's how source author Joe R. Lansdale and moderator/supplement producer Michael Felsher begin their new commentary track on the Blu-ray. If you see only one movie pitting an aging Elvis and an African-American man claiming to be John F. Kennedy against a centuries-old, cowboy-clad mummy sucking the souls of their

latter real-home residents... well, it's a good thing the only one in existence is a pitch-perfect confluence of terror, comedy and pathos.

Star Bruce Campbell may have made an indelible mark on the genre scene with his indelible Ash, but Bubba's Elvis is arguably his greatest performance. Where other actors might have been unable to resist the urge to camp up the King, Campbell plays him with deep reserves of melancholy and rueful humour, plus an eventual determination not to take the ancient creature's ransacking lying down. Goss Davis as JFK is a perfect foil, making the movie a helluva buddy flick on top of everything else.

Coscarelli, who scripted from Lansdale's short story, gets the movie's mix of tones just right, with deceptively wistful mood inside the home and sharper hues outside of it. All those are extremely well-captured in the 1.85:1 transfer on the Screen Factory Blu-ray, backed by clear and arctic DTS-HD 5.1 Master Audio. A rich tapestry of special features has been carried here from MGM's previous DVD, including an observant and informative commentary by Coscarelli and Campbell, and another by the actor as "the King," in which he inhabits the role with same respect he does on screen. Also ported over are an assortment of featurettes, deleted scenes, Lansdale reading from his original story and more.

Coscarelli, Campbell and makeup effects creator Robert Kurtzman offer fresh insights in new interview featurettes, all containing fun





Dead Ringers

behind-the-scenes video. Not surprisingly, Campbell is the most entertaining as he makes a hilariously snarky comment about independent filmmakers and recalls an ill-fated training session with an Elvis impersonator, both he and the writer/director offer their assessments of why the much-longer-for sequel never wound up happening. The very best added extra is that Leland/Felsher track, the author is a great talker, evincing great appreciation for the movie and discussing on everything from the craft of acting to the JFK assassination. They're all good reminders of why *Dubbed No-Fap* continues to stand out like minestrone on a jumpout.

MICHAEL OMSBOLD

TWICE THE FUN

DEAD RINGERS (1988) Blu-ray

Starring Jeremy Irons, Genevieve Bujald
and Heidi von Palleske
Directed by David Cronenberg
Written by David Cronenberg and Herman Kroker
Screenplay by

Perhaps only a filmmaker who'd just had a box-office hit as graphic and gross as *The Fly* could have gotten a movie like *Dead Ringers* done at a major studio, even back in 1988. As cold and clinical as *The Fly* was visceral and heartfelt, *Ringers* sheathed its madness in viewers and some critics at the time but has come to be rightly regarded as one of David Cronenberg's best works. It also showcases arguably the best performance—or pair of performances—in the pantheon of reasonable films guided by the director.

As twin gynecologists Beverly and Elliot Mantle (who portend to address each other with the tongue-in-chee diminutives "Bev" and "Ellie"), Jeremy

Irons creates a double portrait of dysfunction that's mesmerizing from start to finish. Not only does he make each sibling fully dimensional and distinctive, he seamlessly interacts with himself—and in the age of nothing-to-it CGI trickery, it can't be overstated how painstaking the necessary optical effects work was in order to pull off the double-looks illusion, and the level of concentration this must have required of the actor.

Beautifully photographed by Peter Suschitzky in the first of many collaborations with Cronenberg, *Dead Ringers* is presented in two ways in the twin Blu-ray Screen Factory edition. Disc one features an older 1.78:1 transfer, while disc two sports a new 2K scan in the filmmaker's preferred 1.66:1, which is the slightly cleaner and more colorful of the two. The former is accompanied by a pair of audio commentaries: an earlier track by Irons, recasting the production in great detail in that wonderful voice of his, and a lesser discussion by author William Board, addressing what he calls "the saddest" of all of Cronenberg's films in academic but accessible terms.

The second disc contains vintage EPK and interview material, plus a quartet of new on-camera shots providing intriguing side perspectives on the movie. Co-star Heidi Von Palleske recalls *Dead Ringers* as much more fun and comfortable to make than to watch, actor Stephen Lack is either... eccentric as he discusses his own art as much as his collaboration with Cronenberg, makeup effects creator Gordon Smith recalls having practical disagreements with the director on some key gags, and Suschitzky offers insight into both his and Cronenberg's working methods, particularly when shooting with both Irons in the frame.



Gwen Cronenberg's body of work, it's only appropriate that Screen Factory would double up on the extras.

MICHAEL OMSBOLD

AND GRACE TOO

WAMP (1986) Blu-ray

Starring Drew Barrymore, Robert Ruckler
and Grace Jones
Written and Directed by Richard Wark
Arrow Video

There's nothing like a near-death experience to put things into perspective, is there? When pledges AJ and Keith are about to be hanged as part of a fraternity initiation prank, AJ slams on the brakes and points out that the process is dumb: they want to join the frat, the frat wants to party, and a lot of effort could be spared if the brothers just had the pledges organize the party of a lifetime. Keith balks at AJ's offer to get them "anything" but AJ is resolute and let Turns out what the frat really wants at their big bash is a stripper.

In 2016, it's a request that seems nostalgically—even laughingly—straightforward, but for our heroes back in 1986, it presents a bit of a problem: there's many an exotic dancer to be found within 200 miles, and they are decidedly short of both money and wheels. Fortunately wealthy-yet-freelance dark Duncan (Gedde Watanabe) is on hand to save the day, requesting only the chance to visit the strippers in their natural habitat and the limited-term friendship of Keith and AJ in return for a pile of hard cash and the use of his car. The three set off on their quest, and wind up at the sinister After Dark Club, which features a roster of (mostly) undead dancers and management that's literally bleeding the punters dry.

Wamp is a bit uneven, and it's about as scary as a bloodcurdling yet dentures who's lost his Polynesian, but its unexpectedly sassy dialogue and Gary-Gle '90s aesthetic make it a lot of fun. Grace Jones is hypnotic as ancient vampire Katrina, even though she doesn't offer a word, and there are moments of oddly poignant social commentary amid the lunacy.

The Blu-ray sports a short making-of documentary featuring interviews with the



director, cinematographer and most of the principal cast, two trailers, TV spots, bloopers and rehearsal footage, and *Disc Two* the Big Apple, an early horror-comedy short by director Richard Wark that focuses on everyone's favorite bloodsucker taking a trip to NYC in the 1970s. Overall *Wamp* is daffy, but thoroughly enjoyable if you're in the right mood.

CLAIRE HORSWELL

THE LATE-NITE ARCHIVE

FILMS *Freaks of Nature*

by Paul Corio

The concept of British folk horror has made a big comeback recently, helping to redefine a significant swath of the UK's horror history. Although not usually mentioned as playing a significant role in this movement, the ecological thriller *Doomwatch* (1972) should be, as it presents one of the most unique takes on the creepy landscape, secretive rural communities and pagan rituals that define the subgenre. Based on a short-lived BBC series about a not-at-all ominous-sounding UK government environmental agency, the film brings an intriguing science-fiction twist to the story of the inhabitants of a secluded island who are plagued by a disgusting disorder that turns out to be just as dangerous to unwelcome visitors.

The film, which recently made its Blu-ray debut from Kino, has *Doomwatch* investigator Dr. Shaw (Ian Bannen) sent off to study the ecological effects of an oil spill near a small island off the coast of England. On arrival, he gets little co-operation from the close-knit fishing community, except for a schoolteacher (Judy Geeson), who confides that she's seen mysterious behaviour – late-night walks, disappearances and islanders who seem to be afflicted with deformities. Shaw believes the townfolk have arrogantly gone astray by the disgusting disease that afflicted 1940s horror (see *Rondo Hatton*), which would account for the abnormal growths and aggression. After consulting with a Navy admiral (George Sanders in his final role), Shaw discovers a combination of contaminants has infected the fish that make up a large part of the islanders' diet, but the locals refuse to believe him and will preserve their way of life at any cost.

With veteran Hammer director Peter Kosminsky (*Raise the Blood of Dracula*) behind the camera, *Doomwatch* is a distinct product of the 1970s; it's full of paranoia and burgeoning environ-



tal concerns. It's also a clever subversion of the folk horror locus happening at the time. Not only does it employ a structure and premise that seem to anticipate the following year's folk horror masterpiece *The Wicker Man*, it also evokes that unnerving fear at how primitive, superstitious beliefs can thrive in a modern environment. In many earlier folk horror entries, including *Eye of the Devil* (1966) and the British teleplay *Robert Redbreast* (1970), this clash plays out as a Christlike mistake made into a pagan community, but in *Doomwatch*, it's a scientist who must contend with the pervasive influence of the local church.

As a result, *Doomwatch* has a closer kinship with another pioneering folk horror effort, *Quatermass II* (1967), in which the titular scientist struggles to provide scientific rationale to a skeptical rural community with something to hide (plotly briefly). Similarly, the locals in this film are firm in their belief that they're being punished by God

for their sins, including inbreeding. They see Dr. Shaw's plea to stop eating fish and go to the mainland for treatment as forcing them out of their way of life, and in the film's most unnerving scene, they attack Shaw in an effort to keep their secrets hidden.

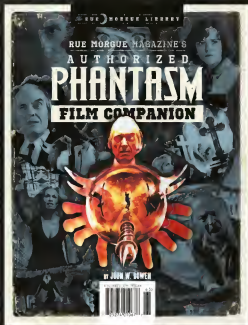
Aside from this assault, there's other striking horror imagery here, from a child's body in a shallow grave that mysteriously vanishes, to Shaw's persona that he's being constantly watched – validated when he discovers his water samples stolen and his camera smashed. But perhaps the most interesting aspect of *Doomwatch* is its depiction of the landscape. While other British folk horror films use a rural setting as an evocative and ominous backdrop, *Doomwatch* goes one step further to make the land itself literally deadly, as it is surrounded by water contaminated with pollution and chemicals thanks to offshore dumping. The result is an ecological thriller that twists familiar tropes into something original.

Unlike films such as *The Wicker Man*, which implies that the old ways of doing things never fade away, even if it means human sacrifice, *Doomwatch* worries that refusing to embrace modern beliefs and scientific reasoning could be just as perilous. **B**



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IT CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT



DRIVE-INS, DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

Nervous Women Need Not Apply

by John W. Bowen

I've unwritten plenty of obitues for this column, but I'll readily admit that from time to time I get by with a little help from my weirdo friends. The Incredible Allop Man and Reptilious came my way from a dear friend in the Midwestern US, closer to home, I was alerted to *The Law Enforcement Girls to Salvage Cuts* by the son of my childhood Sunday school teacher. But it's hardly surprising that our Editor-in-Chief/benevolent despot Dave Alexander has probably dropped more fucked-up shit into my life than anyone else, so allow me to present Dave's latest (pouch) gift, *The Child* (1977, a.k.a. *Zombie Child*) and—seriously—*Kill and Go Home*. It's not a good movie. In fact, it's pretty bad. Really bad, even, but in ways unlike most other bad movies, which is no small achievement, and the film sort of almost works in spite of it. Or because of it. Confused? Well, that's a good start.

The only recognizable name here (for me at least) is late exploitation producer/distributor Harry Novak (Alaska, Redfish and—wait for it!—*Sexual Kung Fu* in Hong Kong, but even that's hardly a whiff of the strange stinky cheese lurking ahead). *The Child* begins with wholesome young Alcamne (Laural Bennett) traveling to some creepy backwoods digs to start her new job—governess to “difficult,” eleven-year-old Rosale (Josaline Cole); things seem a little dodgy as Alcamne navigates the woods, what with half-glimpsed figures on the periphery of every other frame, and they only get more creepy after she arrives. Seems Rosale (who looks about sedentary) is suspected of having offed her mom, and the rest of the clan ain't the most reassuring crew of snuggle bunnies either. “I hope you’re not a ner-



vous woman,” says Norton, her new employer. “Can’t stand nervous women.” Sure, hunky teen apparent Len (Richard Harners) seems to take a shine to our gal, he’s kinda smitty too but she’s gotta need an ally because Rosale’s a telepathic psycho-moppel with a pass of zombies at her command.

The performances are weird and robotic, the dialogue edited and depleted, not helped by being artfully dubbed in post-production. The intrusive, almost nonstop music score and sound effects frequently make no sense (a gentle summer breeze sounds like a blizzard), clots the visual effects, including a fog machine that seems to be having seizures. The cumulative amateurishness of it all makes even the most conventional lens stand like a non-sequitur; the general ambience kept reminding me of some other film, but what? Then, around the half-

way point, it hit me—the thing is like a really shitty version of *Let’s Scare Jessica to Death*, last month’s cover story. In lieu of Jessica’s vampire, which might not be real vampires, we have zombies which—well, I won’t spoil that,

but guess what? All these flows actually begin to work their own moribund magic, leading everything a genuinely creepy disconnectedness.

But then right around the one-hour mark, just as *The Child*’s brain-damaged, doofus vibe threatens to become its charm, everything that hasn’t already gone to shit really goes to shit when a gaggle of zombies attack Alcamne and Len as they try to escape. Is it night? Day? Dusk, or just really overcast? And when it’s suddenly night again, is it the next night? Our protagonists take refuge in a—well, what is it? A shed? A shack? Hard to say, as the set seems to keep changing every couple of shots. Splinter and limb-flailing ensue as Len attempts to quell the onslaught, but what of Alcamne? I’m not sure if “pointless clinging” was the direction Bennett was given, but it’s pretty much all she does in this finale—clinging to railings, window frames and assorted objects while whimpering as her man manfully fails at the relentless zombies (“Relentless” is usually a good thing in a zombie siege, but this is just padding).

It’s hard to pin down how many versions of *The Child* are currently available but *Something Weird Video*’s package—double-billed with *I Eat Her Skin* and bolstered with the usual unusual extras—is a good bet. Now get the hell out of my basement, before I start flailing nervously in your general direction. ☹



BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

by PEDRO CARREZUELO

During the 16th century, astrologer John Dee served as advisor to Queen Elizabeth I, however, he is far more notorious for his many occult philosophies and practices. Along with accomplice Edward Kelley, Dee was determined to use the supernatural to acquire knowledge. Most notably, he directed his efforts to communicating with "angels," reportedly through the use of mystical objects such as a black speculum (an obsidian Aztec relic in the shape of a hand-mirror).

Dee's exploits form the basis of *The Shadow Glass*, a miniseries that uses these mysterious events as a springboard for a more chilling tale.

"I enjoy reading about people who slip through the cracks of conventionality," explains writer and artist Ally Hall. "There was a 'perfect storm' situation for me concerning Dee and Kelley. I love the Elizabethan period, the characters, the costumes, etc., so these two dropped in perfectly. However, ultimately this is not a tale about John Dee or Edward Kelley. Whilst they are important to the narrative, the story is not about them. It is about a young woman who seeks answers [to] that time-old question: Who am I?"

That young woman is eighteen-year-old Rosalind (Rose for short), a non-conformist and pupil of Dee's whose world turns upside down when she learns her father, Adam, is dying. Worse, Adam claims to not be Rose's father at all — but rather, that she is the offspring of Thomas Hughes, a satirical occultist who had an affair with Adam's wife, Arabella. The revelations confuse as the girl learns Adam, Hughes and Dee had staged a ceremony twenty years earlier with the legendary black mirror to summon the angels, using Arabella as a vessel. The creature they summoned, quickly put an end to the ritual. Hughes abandoned his lover and a traumatized Arabella died giving birth to Rose nine months later.

Rose's nightmare grows when Hughes comes back to England, with Edward Kelley at his side, determined to recreate the failed ritual with Dee. But Rose steals the "shadow glass" and does a little summoning of her own.

"For some time I'd been evolving this Elizabethan tomboy character," he says of Rose. "If you follow my work you can sometimes see her there already, so she fell naturally into the early drafts of *The Shadow Glass*. Rosalind dresses as a man in a world where to do so as a woman risks punishment. She's uncomfortable with her place in the world."

This means she's ripe for the picking by Madam, a beautiful, benevolent temptress summoned first by Hughes and then Rose. Madam wastes no time seducing Rose, both physically and spiritually, leading the girl down a spiral of further despair and deadly revelations.

"Madam actually existed historically," says Hall, who used the real-life person as a launching point for his own version of her. "At least she certainly did for Dee and Kelley in Dee's diaries, the angelic beings they conjure up is described as a mischievous girl in a multi-colored dress who ages throughout their time together. She plays upon their desires and questions, making suggestions that eventually go as far as suggesting a white-sleep between Dee and Kelley." Though there are glimpses of other gruesome creatures and a fair share of gory violence, the



The occult lore of John Dee is explored in *The Shadow Glass*

book's true horror focus is on Madam — specifically, her creeping corruption of Rose.

"The horror that exists in *The Shadow Glass* is a result of consequence, not an end game in itself. In some ways, it's partly a love story, or rather an obsession story — the two are so close at times — with a healthy dose of mystery and historical drama. . . . This is presented as a kind of cautionary tale. Here be dragons. Be careful what you wish for."

The Shadow Glass has been collected in one volume, which is out Jan. 17 from Dark Horse Books.

FOLLOW PEDRO ON TWITTER @PCAREZUELO



Ancient Rome is ripe for horror pickings with its constant warring, brutal dictators, human atrocities and pagan rituals. Peter Miligen takes full advantage of this in *Brutarius*, while also throwing in Celtic elements such as druid priests and wyrd women. The result: our hero, Antonius Asa, a combatant in the Roman Empire of 60 AD, must contend with the tyranny of Emperor Nero, bloody swordplay, Earth demons, a seductive forest witch and her wicked, sorcerer father. Under a less talented writer, these elements would clash in an echo other but Miligen manages to weave them together painlessly and without losing focus of Asa's personal journey of coming to terms with the death of his wife during childbirth. It also helps that Juan Jose Ryp's art is beautifully layered, backing in ruptured art deco and the intricate foliage that threatens to swallow up Asa.

When it comes to war stories, one doesn't need to go back to the Roman Empire for inspiration, as the many horror tales set during

World War II prove. The Nazis have become synonymous with evil and the ones found within *Jackboot & Irides* don't alter that image. However, they do have some nicely competition as they take a legendary bell beneath their coats that will signal the opening of the ninth gate of Hell.

This last issue sees the myth become incarnate, an event well worth the wait as a hideous, giant four-legged creature emerges and lays waste to the Nazis. Max Milgate is clearly inspired by Mike Mignola, both thematically and visually. This lends a criticism, namely an affirmation that this highly entertaining tale is also rich in mythology and characters. The end leaves more dangers ahead, so hopefully the author will pay a return visit to his new world.

Dark Souls: Winter's Spite doesn't take place in our world, past or present. The series leans heavily on the battle-charged works of J.R.R. Tolkien and Robert E. Howard, both of whom imagined an Earth populated

with scary and primal monstrosities. Set in a realm teeming with all manner of flesh-eating and pus-oozing creatures, the centerpiece of this first issue is a drawn-out arena battle between the knight Andred — on a quest to retrieve a stolen sword — and Jarl, a towering, troll-like hulk. It's a nasty battle, nicely executed by Alan Kush and interspersed with equally bloody flashbacks that let the reader know what led Andred to his current predicament. It may not be Earth history, but it's close enough to properly chill the blood.

Go West throws readers into the anarchy and violence of the Wild West, except we're not in costumes, but rather the year 2136. It's a world ravaged by war and lawlessness, and Arthur Stale is out to get revenge on the outlaws that murdered his family.

The ensuing bloodletting is quick and dirty, with effective splashes of red on an otherwise yellow-hued palette. Yet this world lacks conviction. We see little of the conflict-ravaged landscape or the dangers that inhabit it; instead we're told about them in a prose introduction. We don't even

get to witness the killing of Stale's family, depriving the reader of a necessary touch point with the character. The idea of a future dystopia mirroring the Old West is an interesting one, and hopefully subsequent chapters will give us a much more satisfying look at what makes this world tick.

For a less conventional dystopia check out *Motro*, an apocalyptic tale of a young boy looking to avenge the death of his father and save the world from legions of monsters. This may sound like a well-worn concept, but Ulises Fanillas has created a barker environment that harkens back to the wickedness of old *Heavy Metal* strips. And so we have a character with a stone head, sentient machine monster



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THE NINTH CIRCLE BOOKS

LOST SOULS OF HORROR AND THE GOTHIC

FIFTYFOUR NEGLECTED AUTHORS, ACTORS, ARTISTS AND OTHERS

Elizabeth McCarthy and Bernice M. Murphy, eds.
McFarlane

Neglected, definition: I pay no attention or too little attention to, disregard or slight

It's a shame that the editors of *Lost Souls of Horror and the Gothic*—an admittedly cool concept and opportunity to shine a light on some forgotten talent—didn't take this definition to heart.

It's hard to make a case, for example, that American folk musician Tom Waits is particularly neglected (he has much to do with horror or the gothic, for that matter, the cozy stretches the "lost souls" concept to refer to the characters in his work). Some for famed occultist Aleister Crowley, author Charles Beaumont (who is well-known for his fiction and contributions to the classic *Twilight Zone* TV series), actress Ingrid Bergman (she was in *Casablanca* for Christ's sake), Ira Levin (author of best-selling novels *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Stepford Wives*) or, most mind-bogglingly of all, Dr. Fredrick Werthman, the man who penned *Seduction of the Innocent* about the alleged ties between juvenile delinquency and comic books, which brought the Comics Code down on creators and publishers and nearly killed off horror comics in the 1950s (perhaps he'd be best left neglected?).

If you can look past those headscratchers, there are actually some genuinely worthy folk within these pages. There are three- to five-page essays on topics such as silent film star Theda Bara, supernatural short story author Oscar Cook, *The Frankenstein Poet* (about the anonymous scribe of the 14th-century poem "Saint Erkenwald") and gothic writer Francis Lathom (1774-1832), among others. It goes without saying that the more obscure the artist, the more revelations there are to be had.

Overall, the book may have beshittled from editors Elizabeth McCarthy and Bernice M. Murphy being more selective about the subjects covered and a bit more heavy-handed in their

disclosure to the writers—some of the pieces are well-rounded and feel complete, while others function almost as tangents.

Lost Souls of Horror and the Gothic does have rewards for the patient (and may even inspire you to track down some of these artists' works), but first one must make it past the misleading title.

MICHELLE KUEBLER

THE BOKE OF THE DIVILL

Reggie Oliver
Dark Horse/Noctua

Reggie Oliver is an undisputed modern master of the horror story (see *RMF154*). His writings contain shades of classic scribes such as M.R. James (with his antiquarian ghost stories and a strong sense of England's rich history) and

Robert Arden (lonely characters must their doom, often sexually tinged), but the blend is all his own—vivid and positively haunting.

After several deservedly praised collections, *The Boke of the Divill* is only his second attempt at a novel. And, if looked at closely, it's not unlike a short story collection, since its structure, with several tales-within-the-tale (including voluminous excerpts from old diaries and letters), is shaped around a few of Oliver's previously published stories. Foremost among them is "The Boke and the Ring" (from *The Spectral Book of Horror Stories*, *RMF150*), which originated the notion of *The Boke of the Divill* and the ring that goes with it. The novel covers more than four centuries of intrigue, starting with late medieval witchcraft, continuing with dark Victorian perversions and pre-WWI Lovecraftian horrors, and culminating in the present day, when a TV documentary crew starts digging up the sordid past of the old English city of Manchester and, of course, awakens the ancient evil.

The weight of the past tends to smother the present so much that the contemporary characters are often reduced to caricatures and mere readers of dusty documents.

For example, the young intern in the TV crew, Emma Hartley, is the nominal central character, but she seems more like a plot device needed to connect the numerous stories rather than a full-blooded personality. Also, the lengthy narration about underground amphibian monstrosities (jocularly "The Archbishop's Well" retold from *Wander Shadows Over Jerusalem*), while excellent in itself, has no bearing on the novel's events and themes. This all means that Reggie Oliver's tension from short stories to novels is not as smooth as one would hope.

Still, it must be stressed that, in spite of this, the wonderful individual parts are greater than their sum. *The Boke of the Divill* contains several books' worth of truly disturbing and scary scenes, images and ideas, and is therefore still strongly recommended to all lovers of memorable chills.

DELAN DOLAN/REVIEWS

EURO GOthic

Jonathan Rigby
Signum Books

Looking for a definitive history of the rise of European horror films? British author Jonathan Rigby (*American Gothic*, *Christopher Lee: The Authorized Screen History*) has done everyone's homework and penned a 400-page third opus in his gothic horror series.

Here, Rigby traces the origins of horror cinema back to early French pioneers such as Georges Méliès and the German expressionist films that emerged in the aftermath of the first World War. Having already chronicled the UK as an earlier book, *Euro Gothic* is a guided tour of continental European horror films. It primarily focuses on the output of filmmakers from France, Spain, Germany and Italy, charting the rise and fall of horror trends in these countries up until around the early 1980s.

In setting his narrative chronologically, Rigby bounces from country to country, examining how shifting politics dictated the kind of horror films that were made (the pre-WWII draining of talent from Germany to Hollywood, postwar boom in the 1960s, etc.). He also notes how differing directors and styles influenced one another: Hammer's *Horror of Dracula* begat Renato Polceh's *The Vampire's Lover*.





Early Gothic: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*



which would in turn inform Hammer's *The Vampire Lovers*.

All the usual suspects crop up (Mario Bava, Dario Argento, Jess Franco, etc.), along with the stories of how their films were funded and shot. The book also sports pulchrous profiling of notable entries, ranging from established classics (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*) to cult items (Horror Express).

Euro Gothic is punctuated with numerous stills, including several in colour, and there's a detailed appendix. It's a more exhaustive account than smaller tomes such as Carlos Claret's illustrated

History of the Horror Film. In fact, it more closely resembles that film school doorstep, David Cook's *A History of Narrative Film*.

Ruby's text fuses criticism and history in a style that's smooth and easy to follow, making it a great starting point for readers seeking context for these movies. The only gripe is that by fusing the bulk of European horror cinema into one tome, it's unlikely we'll get a book-length exploration of, say, purely Italian horror cinema. Still, it's a minor quibble when dealing with a release this well-researched and presented.

JEFF SCHWILAS

THE FERRYMAN INSTITUTE

Colin Giff
Giffory Books

Immortality is a cruelty with no escape. Even crueler is being immortal and stuck with a day job that specializes in death. Here lies the major theme in Charlie Dawson's tale, and the source of his dwindling sanity.

Charlie is a Ferryman in Colin Giff's debut novel *The Ferryman Institute*. He's not quite living, but not quite dead either. He exists in this eternal limbo, employed as a pieceworker who ushers the spirits of the recently deceased away from haunting the Earth and toward the bright, ambiguous light. He's good at his job, and has been at the top of the game for 250 years, but the monotony and lack of humanity is getting to him.

Just as his mind begins slipping, he's assigned to ferry Alice, a bright but troubled young woman, moments away from committing suicide. Though Charlie, and any Ferryman worth his salt, is never to let another human become aware of his exis-

DANTE'S PICK

SIX SCARY STORIES

Curated by Stephen King
Cemetery Dance

When Stephen King's British publisher, Hoober, offered him to judge a short story competition to promote his 2015 short story anthology *The Boomer of Bad Dreams*, a panel of judges whittled the 800-plus entries down to six, which were then met with King's scrutiny. He selected a winner with "Wild Swimming" by Bode Harper, but found himself lamenting that the other five finalists wouldn't get their deserved publication, so he proposed an anthology to Cemetery Dance and the diminutive (but deadly) *Six Scary Stories* was born.

King's top pick begins the volume, with the tale of a "wild swimmer" (a person that travels the world in search of untapped swimming holes, apparently) who visits a remote village in Lithuania and dares to take a dip in forbidden waters. Next, "Eau-de-Eric" by Michelle Senagosa features a little girl whose new favourite teddy bears an uncanny resemblance to her recently deceased father. "The Spider" by Paul Russell Davies takes place in a dystopian future (or present, perhaps) where a big brother-esque mega-brother (known simply as

The Leader) condemns all criminals to the perilous task of courting the spiders on a live leopard at any cost. *Six Scary Stories* leave their bite at night time to play games of their own in Michael Butler's "The Gipsy King," and "La Mort de L'Amant" by Stuart Johnson is a full-on tale of a man as he reminisces on his wife's fondness for metaphors. The book wraps up with "The Bear Trap" by Neil Hudson, about a boy who survives an environmental disaster, only to have to defend his farm against other survivors.

Before each entry in *Six Scary Stories*, the author's bio is presented along with a personal note about King's impact on his or her work, but you need only read the tales themselves to make the connection. All six stories echo the master's toolbox in one aspect or another, particularly the accessible portrayal of painting under duress in "Eau-de-Eric" and my personal favourite "The Bear Trap," which features a young protagonist of such personality and imagination, I missed him once the story ended. Overall, we can safely say that King picks 'em as well as he writes 'em, and I'll likely return to *Six Scary Stories* as often as I do *Night Shift*.

ANDREA SARRISANI



IN JOHN DARNIELLE'S UNIVERSAL HARVESTER, DISTURBING HOME MOVIES SPLICED INTO VIDEO STORE RENTAL TAPES LEAD TO A MYSTERIOUS CULT IN THE HEARTLAND

AMERICA THE STRANGE

BY DAVE ALEXANDER



F YOU'VE LISTENED TO NORTH CAROLINA'S THE MOUNTAIN GOATS, YOU'VE EXPERIENCED JOHN DARNIELLE'S OBTUSE-YET-DETAILED SONGWRITING ABOUT THE HORROR GENRE. Darnielle—who is The Mountain Goats, sometimes playing with others under the moniker, sometimes alone—has taken inspiration from Ian Chaney Jr. in the *Indestructible Man* ("Rotten Stinking Mouthpiece"), a skunkman playing Michael Myers ("Michael Myers Resplendent") and H.P. Lovecraft, as a metaphor for paranoia ("Lovecraft in Brooklyn"). Not surprisingly, his latest novel, *Universal Harvester* (out February 7 from Farrar, Straus and Giroux), is unconventional right from its title, which references more than the long-running farm equipment company.

"It's a really ominous-sounding phrase to me, just because...you know, what happens at a harvest?" Darnielle ponders. "Everything gets cut down. That's for the good of everybody, of course—you get food from the harvest—but the field goes from green and alive to a wholly razed expanse, and the job gets done by these giant loud machines. Add 'universal' to that vision and it's kind of apocalyptic to my ear."

His follow-up to 2014's *Wolf in White Van* follows several characters throughout different decades who are tied together by unerring footage spliced into rental tapes at a Newtwa, Iowa, video store in the 1990s. When the store's clerk, Jeremy, starts to investigate, he exposes himself and several others around him to a mystery involving a missing woman, a cult and something horrible that happened on an isolated farm.

"I had a thought to place the story during a specific period of time that's now lost," explains Darnielle of the setting. "Because of the rapid growth of technology over the past 50 years or so, the past kind of becomes murky and inaccessible faster, even though there's more documentation of it than there ever was of previous eras—a weird, attractive paradox for me."

Universal Harvester evokes a strange atmosphere, as it's very specific with its times, places and character details, yet its timelines jump around and it remains sketchy on certain horrific elements, often just mentioning them offhand so the reader imagines something particularly awful.

"[C]larly is a big value of mine, but I have this vision of a clarity that sort of can't resist wandering into smugger places, places that seem scary because they're ambiguous," admits Darnielle. "I wanted to have people really knowing each other and being in the world together, and I wanted to think of how some normal, everyday living stuff has its own abysses under it."

The novel dances around its abyss, creating a feeling of unease, where the reader waits for the other shoe to drop. A feeling of deep dread develops as one character is slowly pulled into the clutches of the cult.

"Often when I want to see or read horror I specifically hope there's some cultic or religious element," he explains. "I think there's a lot of reasons why that vector is effective—obviously religion is concerned with the establishment of taboos, which are ready-made for horror, and also religion traffics in mystery and in secrets—unknown stuff, stuff you can't really

know about unless you're on the inside. Lovecraft was pretty into this concept, too, I think the idea of unknown orders behind surface realities is pretty ripe horror territory. But also, for me, ever since I was a kid I've felt this way: the realm of things that scare me and the realm of the sacred or damned, they have a lot of overlap. Scary things are otherworldly, they're out there in the realm where the gods and demons do their business."

Darnielle mines *Universal Harvester* to the tradition of the Weird Tale as embodied by British author Robert Aickman (RMN48).

"Horror for me is the terrain of the unknown," he says. "Specifically, things you don't know that feel dangerous, secret things that might have some sort of power, actual power, or just the power to nag at you. Unsettling images you can't get out of your head. I like a lot of '70s and '80s splatter gore, too, but my main lookout is always mood—a feeling of some uncertain danger. Dread. I think *Universal Harvester* is partly about digging deep into somebody's personal dread and how they've dealt with it and tried to master it, and how others in that person's life are implicated or affected by that dread. I tend to prefer I don't know why, but this is kind of frightening to that effect—uncertainty, that can be pretty horrific all by itself for me."





tence, he breaks the rules and tries to save her. This understated send-the-pair-into-a-helipad, complete with car chases and exploits in to the underbelly of the mysterious world between life and death.

Gigi's novel could have easily rested on its laurels, having such an innovative premise, but thankfully it has far more merit than mere originality. Though the characters are engaging, their chemistry is one of the better literary experiences I've had in a while. Charlie is smart and egotistical, for good reason, but his conversations with his mentor Carveright are witty and honest. I would have been perfectly content reading an entire volume filled only with their banter.

The *Ferryman* institute also outdoes itself at world creation — it's so fleshed out, you can practically smell it, and it all nestles together perfectly to form a complete and coherent world. The bureaucracy within evokes both Doris Willis's Oxford Time Travel series and the urban escapism in Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*. Though not nearly as deftly written as either of those, Gigi has certainly set himself up as a worthy successor to a rich literary throne.

CERTAIN DARK THINGS

Silvia Moreno-Garcia
Thomas Dunne

It's fascinating that almost every region of the world has its own vampire folklore, but here in North America we're most frequently exposed to the elegant seducers born of — and evolved from — the European vampire literary traditions of 1800s, which first hit critical popular mass after the publication of John Polkison's *The Vampyre* (it later became cemented with Bram Stoker's *Dracula*). Sure, we've thrown in some modern New World concepts, including working-class bloodsuckers and extensive social and political hunches for our fangs, and have even on occasion gone full-on monster with them, but much of the time, the undead remain variations on this long-running ball, dark and handsome theme.

Silvia Moreno-Garcia's novel immediately stands out as it manages to distance itself from this norm without entirely dismissing it. *Certain Dark Things* is the story of seventeen-year-old human Domingo and Ali, a "Tlahuapochtli" vampire descended from the Aztecs — just one of almost dozen species of vamps in existence around the world (all handily referenced in the book's glossary). Being a Tlahuapochtli means that Ali can shapeshift into a winged form and that she feeds in a much more bird-like manner than your typical fangers. Ali meets Domingo while on the run from Nick, a *Necro* vampire (one of the particularly vicious European species) who's a member of a competing drug cartel that's already executed her mother and sister and many of her people. Nick would have her tortured and killed next, but Ali has a plan to get out of the country and she's employed Domingo to help.

Despite its young main characters, *Certain Dark Things* isn't a young adult book, and serves up both violence and a realistic ending. Regardless of Ali and Domingo's initial feelings for each other and how they evolve over the course of the narrative, there is no forgetting who's the monster and who's the human and what those distinctions ultimately mean for them both.

If you're bored of pale, seductive heartbreakers boasting a mouthful of fangs and not much else, take a trip to Mexico City with Moreno-Garcia where the only thing that'll kill you faster than a drug habit are the literal monsters running the cartel selling you the stuff.

MARISA S. KUTLER

LIBRARY OF THE DAMNED

ENTERTAINING WITH FEEDING HANNIBAL

When a review copy of Titan Books' gorgeous oversized hardcover *Feeding Hannibal: A Cannibal's Cookbook* landed on my desk, my head immediately filled up with city dais. I'll cover it for my column! I'll cook up one of the dishes and give you all a play by play! It'll be great! Only it wasn't. I didn't.

You see, as I began flipping through the 240-page book it quickly became evident that I really should have taken the word "Cannibal" on the cover more seriously, because this is a recipe book for Hannibal fans who are also serious foodies, and while I may fit into the former category, I'm far from the latter.

Things you will need it want to attempt many of the recipes that Janice Poon, the TV show's food stylist, has compiled within an

adventurous appetite (we're not cooking with actual human parts, of course, but there are dozens of ingredients called for that I've never heard of), a grocery store that stocks exotic meats, vegetables and spices (especially if you plan to make any of the dishes outside of the Breakfast and Appetizers sections), and a modicum of cooking skill. Nothing I'm blessed with, unfortunately. (A quick internet search reveals that no one else seems to be attempting the recipes either.)

But for those chefs in the house, *Feeding Hannibal* is not only a great cookbook with clear, concise instructions on preparation and presentation, it's a wonderful collector's item, featuring many full-page, glossy full-color pictures of the meals alongside occasional stills from the show.

Following an introduction by *Hannibal* star Mads Mikkelsen, it launches into the recipes, all developed with a special episode and scene in mind. Poon includes a one- to three-paragraph intro to each discussing its origins. For instance, Ann (Kim Wing) is inspired by the meal Hannibal cooked with Anthony DiMaggio's arm, of which the main ingredient here is "one Jarón Inabisco, base-in." (Yeah, I had to Google that too.)

The recipes are collected into six sections — Breakfast; Appetizers, Meats — Meat, Meats — Fish and Vegetarian; Soups, Salads and Side Dishes; and Desserts and Drinks — while additional chapters on "Achieving the Hannibal Look," "How to Hannibalize Your Table" and "The Food Stylist's Locker," which offers some tips and tricks of the trade, round out the book.

If you know what items such as "ají Amarillo pepper sauce," "pig's trotters" and "trinidad" are or know where to acquire stuff like "veal lungs, trimmed of tracheal tubes" or a "half calf's head, skinned and boned with tongue and brain separate," this might be up your alley! If, however, this sounds as daunting to you as it did to me, just gift this marvelous tome to a culinary-minded friend who can be convinced to cook for you.

JENNIFER S. KUTLER

THE FRIGHT GALLERY

EDITED BY GARY PULLIN

THIS MONTH: DANIEL CHUDZINSKI

The "imaginative Realism" genre was a foreign term to me until I found the work of Alaska's Daniel Chudzinski, a classically trained sculptor who creates jaw-droppingly realistic life-sized anatomicals with a sinister steampunk aesthetic. He crafts fantastic bodies and other objects out of oligodactyl skin and horns.

As a teenager, he studied under his father, an anatomy/biology professor, dissecting and collecting specimens while other kids played video games. He soon volunteered at the zoo, where he observed animal autopsies and became their resident taxidermist. A tour through an anatomy studio resulted in employment there and Chudzinski spent a year building life-sized avatars of celebrities and large sets for theme parks and museums.

Currently working at a special effects company that builds functional anatomy for film and historical re-enactments, I caught up him as he

was finishing work on the cryptozo-themed indie feature *The Ringo*.

Do you write the stories and history that accompany your characters? The Eternal Blaze of Madame Ethena, Pestilence, The Mudpuppy — those characters seem connected by a grander narrative arc.

The characters are indeed a part of a larger story arc. Like Tolkien, J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, I find myself regularly retreating to an imagined realm populated by outlandish characters and haunting landscapes. My finished sculptures offer glimpses of this fictitious world. I have never experienced a lack of inspiration, as evidenced by my library of sketchbooks filled with ideas. ... The accompanying narratives help to give a deeper context to the obsessive details present in the work. For example, the *Reliquary of St. George* was created to satisfy a question that I had as a child, after hearing the legend of St. George and the Dragon: "What happened to the body of the dragon?"

What's the biggest challenge when creating your sculptures?

Time is the biggest challenge when creating any

work. I strive for originality, which means that there is never an existing blueprint or tutorial when I begin a project. ... From the initial concept sketches and measurements, to sculpting the figure full-scale and making the molds, to casting the bronze and physically installing the work on location, I perform all of the necessary steps to bring a work of art to fruition. A sculpture can take anywhere from several weeks to a year or longer.

What's your next project or exhibit?

Most recently, I have been developing a body of work based upon a personal fascination with cryptozoology, or the study of species thus far unverified by science (Bigfoot, Loch Ness Monster, etc.). I am also currently curating *The Enchanted Brush Exhibition*, which will debut this June at the Meza Museum in Findlay, Ohio. For the exhibition, I have recruited some of my artist friends from around the world to create their own original interpretations of their favorite fairy tale characters. The first two years of the exhibit were a huge success. For last year's "Welcome to the Jungle" theme, I transformed the gallery into a full-scale set of the Angkor Wat temple (in Cambodia) and had live snakes crawling the walls during the opening. This year, I am working on a slightly more ominous set and a large sculpture for a theme that will inevitably pique the public's interest: *villains*.

Check out more of Chudzinski's work at dan-chudzinski.com or mezamuseum.org



Fantasy



Reliquary of St. George



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THE GORE MET

MENU: FOLLOWING H.G.'S RECIPE

Ionor fandom lost two exploitation pioneers with the recent deaths of Herschel Gordon Lewis (who, at 90 years old, was still active in the film industry), and one of his early competitors, Ted V. Mikels, who was 87 and still making movies. In honour of a passing era, we dig into a truly once-upon-a-time double-bill.

In one of the commentary tracks for Lewis' early gore films, producer David Friedman mentions that the first flick refused to compete against the lucrative box office business of *Blood Feast* (1963) and *Two Thousand Maniacs!* (1964) was *The Undertaker and His Palace* (1966), the sole directorial effort of one T.L.P. Swengeson. Is that a pseudonym? Could be, as filmmaking at this budget level in the '60s was non-union and actors and crew used fake names to avoid problems with their respective unions.

The Undertaker in this film is desperate for business, and his pals want free meat for their grungy diner, *The Greasy Spoon*. Dressed in motorcycle leathers and imposing helmets, they pick random names out of a phonebook, murder women, and, uh, split the proceeds. In the opening scene, they stab a victim, Mr. Lamb, to death and make off with her legs, which are served as "Leg of Lamb" the following day. Well, get it? Swengeson chose to temper the gore murders and real surgery footage inserted (not instructional films [mostly removed before distribution] with arch humour. But as stupid as the gags, it's remarkably polished and well-acted in comparison to the films that inspired it.

One of the regulars at the diner is private investigator Harry Gass (James Westmoreland, billed as "Red Fulton"), who becomes suspicious of the ubiquitous undertaker Mort (Roy Dennis, who also appeared in the bottom half of this double bill), when he's at the murder scenes of two of Gass' convoluted secretaries. The third



The Undertaker and his pals

secretary, Friday (Winona Oxt), twin sister of the second secretary, Thursday, helps the bumbling Gass unmask her sister's killers.

The gore is of surprising quality. Along with the hacked-off legs, there's a woman impaled on a fence, another is the victim of amateur surgery (insert genuine thoracic surgery footage here), a nasty clean whipping (see above), and a screwdriver to the forehead.

VCI Video released *The Undertaker and His Palace* (DVD in 2003), but it's apparently in the public domain as it's also available in quite good quality on at least one of Mel Cade's 50-movie compilations, the *Pure Terror* set. It could even be the same transfer.

The consumption of human flesh is also a fixture of one of Ted V. Mikels' most successful films, *The Corpse Grinder* (1971).

Cats go crazy – literally – for Lotus cat food. That's because the cash-strapped owners recently added a secret ingredient to it – freshly buried corpses disintegrated by a greedy grave-digger and his grubby wife! Handsome Dr. Howard Gass (Sean Kenney) and his telegraphic research friend Angie Robinson (Marilee Kelly) work with the government regulatory body, the

Food Adulteration Agency (F), to determine the contents of Lotus cat food after their Slesian cat attacks the physician in the hospital they work at. It seems that once cats get a taste of Lotus, they want to eat their owners. Meanwhile, ruthless Lotus owner Lander (Stanford Mitchell) starts leading his employees into the hopper he hides in the back of his run-down factory to cover up his crimes.

This film has a unique provenance. The screenplay was written by Joseph Cranston and Arch Hall, Sr. – the director of cult classic *Esqah* (1962), and the father of Arch Hall, Jr., star of another cult classic, *The Sadist* (1963). It's played nice for subtle laughs here – the corpse-grinding machine is too rickety to take seriously – but there's enough blood and severed limbs to have satisfied early gorehounds.

Image Entertainment released *The Corpse Grinders* as part of its Out Classic Collection in 2001, but for this column I dug deep into the VHS bins here at Casa del Gore-met for the World Video Pictures oversized clamshell from sometime in the '80s, which according to the bumper after the FBI warning, is a "Celebrity Video Presentations release." I hope Ted would have appreciated that. RUP.





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REVIEW BY KIRA GREEN, JAMES A. HENRY, SHAY FLEMING, CHRIS NOVELLA AND GLENN TILSON



BLACK MIRROR: MEN AGAINST FIRE

SCOREBOOK

Ben Salisbury and Geoff Barrow

LABYRINTH RECORDS/ARCADE RECORDS

Ben Salisbury and Geoff Barrow's music for Season Three of *Black Mirror* features a highly distinctive amalgam of synthetic and organic sounds extracted from vintage and orchestral elements. The suite of material gradually evolves from breathy statements and veiled drones to sterile, industrial echoes and pulses, and the album's electrified misadventure eventually morphs into garbled orchestral waves that drift and dribble into a deep, murky sonic pool. It's music that allows one to melt into a dimension where paranoia bakes the subject through pulsars, soft beats and tenebrous clouds, and although the subtleties of the score might baffle its intrusions, both short and epic tracks offer musical statements that evolve with slow-burning precision, or blast in and out with serenity and economy. Beret of shock cues and loud stabs, *Black Mirror* operates on a low electrical current that pulls, gently smoothes, and ultimately releases the listener back to a safe place. **S.A.S.S. MVP**



FELLINI SATYRICON

SCOREBOOK

Nino Rota

ROBINSON RECORDS

Nino Rota's challenge for the band's graphic Satyricon was to push despair into a mythic underworld set in ancient Rome, evoking a musical past at which little actually survives

Satyricon is neither orchestral, jolly or carnivalesque, instead it earns its place as one of Rota's most daring works, the best under-30-minute score is comprised of seemingly abstract percussions, woodwinds and shimmering metallic surfaces with echoing effects, plus the odd fuzzy star, strategic electric guitar chord and blurring walls from an elephant-like horn. The occasional vocals are sometimes closer to African and South Asian roots, and the lack of a firm cultural identity plus drifting thematic fragments create a weird yet soothing journey. Avoid the score's rustic quality, imperfect stereo image and free-form tempo. Rota's still organic cohesion. *Satyricon*'s release is based on the first sourced from newly discovered stereo masters, and it's a very close recording that will please devoted fans of the dynamic composer and director. **S.A.S.S. MVP**



DEATH VALLEY HIGH

SCORE

CVLT (AS FVK)

Music Now Records

It takes time to crystallize your inner monster. San Francisco quartet Death Valley High started out as a scratchy post-hardcore band in the vein of Refused, albeit with a penchant for macabre lyrics. Gradually, it's refined into its current identity as a pantheon of horror-informed death disco. Album number three, *CVLT (AS FVK)*, ups the stakes (through the heart) with monster beats, sinister synths and guttural guitars. The result is twelve tracks of music to dance or die to that voraciously brings to mind early Marilyn Manson, Rob Zombie and Deftones. *Frontlines* Rylea DeLore can belt screams ("Sunshine, Cleanness") and croon ("Mama, Robbers"), and his wry word play is finally rooted in his love of scary movies. That can mean odds to witchy women ("Psalm 84"), give today

tales ("There Was an Old Lady") or watching slanders with a scored drile ("Ick Switch"). Consider this perfect recipe for dancing in — and with — the dark. **S.A.S.S. SP**



ROTTEN UK

(PUNK)

That Is Not Dead...

HELLS REPARATIONS

It's not often a punk band ends up on the Hell's Reparatons roster, but Rotten UK is much more than just punk. Its very and dense take on the genre incorporates death rock, cross-over thrash and reverb-drenched postpunk. Led by vocalist Steve Wilecous, Rotten UK injects *Exquisite* Christian Death swagger and spooky vibes into short, fast, sweet cuts such as "Slipping Into Darkness" and "Astral Service," recalling the Morris and fellow Englishmen Atrocity. The nightmare, gothic imagery of the lyrics bumps up against sociopolitical commentary with a searing edge. If this was 1980, Rotten UK would likely have a spot on the reverse *Album of the Year* Dead



PUTRIFIED

SCORE

The Flesh, The Symbiot, The Tomb

Uncle Prophets

Despite being grounded in the retro Swedish death sound, Stockholm's Putrified confounds expectations. Aggly named vocalist A. Death delivers his funeral sermons with a hoarse bark rather than the usual howling-churning guttural, and the band readily avoids the bassist's guitar synergies with the scene. Furthermore, the covers, instrumental interludes and encores spanning this 7-inch show an obsession with the morbid and macabre, but are linked with an off-theatrical class of Discharge-style gory punk. The *Mutants* "Devil's Warehouse" is lost in indecipherable blast beats, while even the monolithic sludge of Celtic Frost's "Mortal Tales" drags



WITCHERY

SCORE

In His Infernal Majesty's Service

Century Music Records

Twenty years ago, death metal was sufficing in its own gore, black metal embraced a "no fan" ideology, and Witchery's sleekly *Reckless and Destructive* breath of fresh air in a rusty crypt. Yet, by the release of 2013's *Witchery*, they'd opted for a dinner path and in *In His Infernal Majesty's Service* continues down the same road with the pedal to the metal. Said metal is colored by a melodic interlude on the brilliantly titled lead track "Loverly-athan." The on-line church organ intro to "Escape From Danawich World," the apocalyptic waltz on "The Burning of Salem" and the Sisters of Mercy-esque synth throughout the otherwise torrescos "Oath Breaker," "Empty Tomb," meanwhile, features a speed-fragile breakdown as hard to describe as it is to forget, and the vaguely catchy "Nobiscum" is more representative of the album as a whole. This is both a career highlight and one of the year's best, indispensable. **S.A.S.S. GT**



LISTEN TO MY NIGHTMARE

When I discovered horrorcore artists such as Necro and Mr. Hyde several years ago I instantly fell in love, despite not being the world's biggest hip-hop fan. But I always excused Detroit's Twiztid—probably because of their association with Insane Clown Posse and the fact that I'm not into the whole juggalo thing. I knew they dressed like scary clowns and the press releases that fill my inbox seem to promote them as some kind of horror act, so when I opened an email asking me to cover their 12th album, *The Conscious Evolution of Life's 7's* (out this month on their own Mayk Naga Entertainment label), I took it as my opportunity to delve into what the dastardly duo is all about.

Listening to the new album I was initially struck by how not-horror it sounds. That's cool, horror music has no true definition, with different musical styles incorporating the genre in various ways. I was also surprised that it sounds less like hip-hop and more like alternative rock and go-metal from the early 2000s. Lyrically I heard a lot of sadness about how bad some of today's youth feel, with occasional outbursts of violence on songs such as "Kill Somebody" and "Psychomaniac," an obvious genre nod. I contacted the band via email to ask about its relationship with the genre.

"I feel our time as if the horror genre has reignited or less incorporated us into it rather than the other way around," says rapper Jamie Madrox, who forms the group with Monoxide. "It's so much a part of what we do, the entertainment we enjoy, the things we watch, the celebrities we collect, it's very prevalent in our everyday lives so of course it finds its way into our music."

"They don't consider themselves to be horrorcore, though." "I don't think that horrorcore is a good term to describe us. We are the wicked shit!" Madrox offers.

The closest I came to an answer about how horror works in their music was when I asked him if a theme exists on the new album.

"Killing, chopping, stabbing and cutting are among the many actions that bring about a crime-scene-soaked horror theme when called for upon the record."

Whatever their horror message may be, Twiztid still seems to be more about posturing and prying (in the past two months the group has announced four different parties including an album release show at the Whiskey-A-Go-Go in Hollywood).

Well, I've listened to a Twiztid record for the first time in my life, and if the clowns got you interested, the new album drops January 27, with presumably more parties to follow.

Here's to keeping an open mind and exploring new horrors in 2017. **JASON KON LUTFON**



gles for recognition. "Meticulous" ("I" and "II") are atmospheric and engaging enough but mostly function as segues into the covers, and lack much compositional identity. "Sarcophagus" and "The Scythe Descends," meanwhile, represent the aforementioned Smeagol-punk, with some black metal melodies seeping the latter. Perhaps not worth the trouble of digging up, but harmful enough. **B.B. GT**



DEVILENT

II – The Magistrate Writes Necron Black Records

Were you extra cool last year? Then maybe Kneeples rewarded you with a copy of *Devilent II: The Magistrate Writes* because the sophomore record from Cradle of Filth frontman Dave Filth's other band Devilent (don't you dare call it a side project) is an accomplished metal album with punk, rock and groove guitars running through its pulsing veins. The dark-hearted beast also has a sty sense of humor, exemplified by Filth-y lyrics like those in the peaking track to last "Ooo Della Morte" ("I'm Jekyll to her Hedi Klun / The real-life Creatine from the Black Lagoon"). Filth and his co-conspirators tip their top hat to horror on the Frankenstein monster-voiced riff machine "Judas Stein," while "Hitchcock (Remix)" pays tribute to Almodóvar's periodized pebbles. Compared to Cradle, *The Magistrate* *Writes* is less baroque and more desecrated but still flashes its devil horns with pride. **S.S.S. GP**



of pseudo-coastal intellectualism." When the track that makes it anyone's guess, but let's just say that if they wrote a horror flick they wouldn't be clumsily lurching at you with a machete but twisting your brain sideways like *Enterbrain* or *Jacob's Ladder*. The three lengthy songs here pay loose homage to black metal's sleazy elements—tremolo-picked guitars, incessant drum clutter, snarling vocals—but explode them outward and stretch them into bizarre new shapes. Rather than adhere to anything resembling traditional song structures, the tracks warp and bend like horrific visions torn from the spirit world, offering little to cling to beyond warped creaks and a smattering sense of dread. Fans of crime acts such as *Gone With Tongues*, *Portal* and *Candelabra* would do well to take note, though those with weaker minds and stomachs should steer clear. **S.S.S. AD**

DERANGED [REVIEW]
Struck By a Monster's Gaze
Necron Records
Ed Gein, coincidentally the subject of the film *Deranged*, conceived his cannibalistic, glove-robbing tendencies by hiding non-threateningly into the background. Now, make no mistake. *Struck By a Monster's Gaze* will still aggravate neighbors. Family and other non-metalheads you're forced to interact with daily, but it seems to play things far too safe. Guffawed vocals grant about verbiage, yellers and the gnat engendered by both as the riffs and drum-work speed by in the background. More memorably, "Slivers Down Your Broken Spine" brings things to a relentless sludge-budge before its whitewashed sole—a mel-storm of picking, swoops and drags—erupts. Shortly afterwards, "Toy Box Torture Chamber" attempts the same to devastating results, largely due to a problematically similar principal riff. Then again, serial killers do follow patterns, right? Also, on the trauma spectrum *Deranged's* latest is closer to watching a movie about a psycho than meeting one at the finish. **S.S.S. GT**



SORGUINAZIA

Sorguina

VAULT OF DIED BONES

Instead of simply posing themselves black metalists, the mysterious entity known as Sorguina is apparently comprised of "shamanistic butchers



NECROPHAGIA FRONTMAN KILLJOY LAUNCHES HIS LATEST BAND, HAXXAN, WITH AN ALEISTER CROWLEY CONCEPT RECORD



AARON VON LUPTON

THE DEBUT ALBUM BY BLACK METAL OUTFIT HAXXAN SEEMINGLY PROMISES SOMETHING MONSTER-THEMED WITH ITS TITLE *LOCH NESS RISING*, but the name is actually a reference to a very different kind of horror icon, famed British occultist Aleister Crowley. He was dubbed the "other Loch Ness monster" in a 2000 BBC documentary detailing the dark rituals he performed in his manor on the shore of the home of the Scottish cryptid.

The man behind Haxxan is none other than vocalist Killjoy, known to *Rise* Magazine readers and in the extreme metal underground as the brainchild behind the bands Necrophagia, Mundfunk, Resonant, and others.

"My man had a set of Aleister Crowley tarot cards (which I still have)," says Killjoy of his introduction to the dark mystic. "That piqued my interest at an early age... I've collected countless Crowley books and writings over the years. I used to buy bootleg VHS documentaries. He did his own thing and pushed to many boundaries and limits. He truly was the most evil man that ever lived."

Indeed, Crowley has inspired many a headbanger since being immortalized in the metal world by Gary Coburn's 1980 hit "Mr. Crowley," which, in a way, cemented the false popular belief that the ceremonial magician was a Satanist, due to its lyrics. "You walked on Satan's call" (black metal has certainly shown allegiance with Satan since its inception so one wonders if it's an accurate game in which to represent Crowley and his writings).

"Crowley went far beyond Satanism," Killjoy explains. "I respect Anton Leyk by far he certainly more than borrowed from Aleister. I think it's the perfect medium/gears for a concept record about Crowley. We have incorporated a lot of different moods into the songs to try to reflect upon each side of what Crowley lived through or wrote about. Shawn [Slaznek, guitarist] and I talked to make the songs very raw yet catchy and ready."

Out February 17 on Hell's Headbangers, *Loch Ness Rising* hearkens back

to black metal's early primal and raw Celtic Frost days but with a more unique sound. Often slow and maniacally plodding, Slaznek's guitar lines and random solos are twisted, while Killjoy adds synth for more eerie atmosphere.

"I played synth in my horror side project Enosh many years back," he notes. "It most definitely adds atmosphere to the songs in the right places, but we don't overuse it."

While Killjoy's main gig Necrophagia is decidedly death metal, he has dabbled in corpse paint before, including the unfortunate "Fling Crown," a band started by Phil Anselmo, who coincidentally used the stage name Anton Crowley.

"I really can't ignore the passion I have for black metal," Killjoy gushes. "It's always within me and I felt it was time to use it as a creative outlet again... Many black metal bands have cited Necrophage as an influence including Mayhem, Dark Throne, and Emperor. I have a very deep connection to this style of music."

While Killjoy and Slaznek formed Haxxan in 2011 they didn't round out the lineup until last year. Plans to tour in 2017 are now taking shape. *Loch Ness Rising* will receive both a CD and vinyl release and while LP packaging plans have not yet been revealed, a slipcase will include five

best cards.

While it may all seem like a somewhat cartoonish approach to explore someone like Crowley, Killjoy is the right man for the job.

"He was tedious, borderline genius, more than a bit insane and completely awakening," he allows. "He would do or go through anything to gain knowledge or insight. He went through many types of physical and mental torture to have firsthand experience. He was not afraid to discount the writings of others even if it meant he would lose his place with a certain sect or group. He was always willing to do whatever it took in the most extreme ways or conditions. I don't think there will ever be anyone else like him."



NEW GAMES

NOW PLAYING > SLAYWAY CAMP, HIDE AND SHRIEK



SLAYWAY CAMP

Windows, Mac, Linux
Vice-Morbid Digital

Wise do you get when you into a retro gaming aesthetic, '80s slasher movies and a Sokoban-style sliding puzzle game? Well, you get *Slayway Camp*, but the devil is in the details. Blue Wizard Digital offers more than the sum of its parts. While many horror games of 2016 played off a retro-'80s vibe, *Slayway Camp* makes all the right buttons for slasher fans with incredible attention to detail (the QRS-quality pause screen cracked me up) and countless movie references that'll tickle WIS-ers' slasher fans with copious amounts of pixelated blood.

You play as Skullface, a psychotic masked murderer with an itch that only killing kids, cops and granolas at a summer camp will scratch. Skullface takes care of the bloody carnage — all you have to do is lead him to the victims to be kidnapped, stabbed, eviscerated, disemboweled or otherwise dispatched. Here's the catch — Skullface's destiny doesn't necessarily up to his killing skills; he has a tendency to slide off the way to the side of the screen in the direction that you indicate, so you'll have to strategize your moves to keep him from landing on a fire pit, falling down a hole or getting plucked by the buzz. Should you make a misstep, you can "rewind" your last moves (à la *Wii Uaze*) and



get Skullface back on course.

Slayway Camp boasts some serious indie gaming pedigree, and it shows. While Jason Kapalka (*Sidewinder* designer), Ido Yehav (*Civilian Guard*) and Nets Schmold (*Comstock*) might not be well-known in horror circles, they display an astonish-

ly well-rounded and nuanced grasp of the genre. The game is available for a mere ten bucks on Steam, but you can also play it for free through Kongregate's gaming platform. My only wish is for a mobile version because *Slayway Camp*'s puzzle gameplay and simple controls would be perfect for an app. Stay on, sleaz!

ANGELA SHERGATE



HIDE AND SHRIEK

Windows
Fancore

Defeat, outlive or outsmart your opponent: these are the objectives of *Hide and Shriek*, Fancore's light-hearted, Halloween-themed, one-on-one strategy game that tests your cunning, dexterity and imagination. Every Halloween night, the magic students at Little Spooks High and Ironmouth Academy engage in an annual tradition of frantically frightful rivalry, where they break into school after midnight, turn themselves invisible and try to score more other out of their wits. Frighten your opponent three times in a row to end the round and win, but be warned: the game's definition of a "score" is simply tripping a trap, which causes something (be won't spoil it to jump out at you).

Hide and Shriek's matches are ten minutes long. You earn points by finding mystical glowing orbs and placing them on your opponent's moves around in the game, or by luring your opponent into traps you set with spells. The spells of your disposal depend on the runes you've found strewn throughout the classroom



and bewitching environments (including inside desk drawers, cabinets and lockers).

Curious spells grant you their traps or help you find your ally, while others can be used to set traps in drawers and doorways. Continued play unlocks increasingly smaller opponents.

Hide and Shriek's quick rounds, superb environment design and emphasis on play or reaction makes it ripe for reaction videos. The school environments are well-rendered and incredibly imaginative with the kind of

cute 'n' sick you would expect of a magic school, but *Hide and Shriek* proves tricky with doors that open inward — especially when you're trying to be discreet.

\$11, for \$5.99 USD, the game's simple concept is easy enough to pick up and play for gamers both young and old — although Fancore makes no disclaimer about strong language resulting from a good score! If you've ever wondered what it'd be like to roleplay as Harry Potter reaching about in Hogwarts' School of Witchcraft and Wizardry after hours, *Hide and Shriek* offers one possible answer. Ready or not, here I come!

ANGELA SHERGATE



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CLASSIC CUT

QUATERMASS AND THE PIT

HAMMER FILMS UK -1967-

This year, Hammer's production of *Quatermass and the Pit* celebrates its 50th anniversary, and its themes of science versus superstition, and us versus them, resonate as strangely today as they did a half-century ago.

Penned by Nigel Kneale (*The Stone Tape*, *The Woman in Black* TV movie), the *Quatermass* series was first broadcast on BBC television in the 1950s, starting with *Quatermass and the Planet* (1958), and became a huge hit. The *Quatermass Experiment* (RMT66) was the blueprint for almost every body horror film that followed, while *Quatermass and the Pit* is a yardstick for alien invasion dramas.

Released in the US as *Five Million Years to Earth*, and directed by Hammer veterans Roy Ward Baker (*Scars of Dracula*), *The Legend of the 7 Golden Hampers*), the plot concerns the discovery of several skeletons and a spaceship buried at a London Underground station under construction. The army is called in but dismisses the finding as a wartime hoax. Professor Bernard Quatermass (Andrew Keir) thinks otherwise and teams up with fellow scientist Matthew Roney (James Donald) and his assistant Barbara Judd (Barbara Shelley) to solve the mystery. Caught in red tape between his superiors in the Ministry and the army's Colonel Bevan (Julian Glover), Quatermass breaks rank to slowly discover the truth behind these seemingly dormant objects put here five million years ago – a secret that may destroy humanity.

All of Kneale's *Quatermass* stories deal with some kind of social anxiety and paranoia – whether it's the threat of communism in *Quatermass 2*, or postwar body horror in *Experiment*. In *Pit*'s original three-hour television broadcast in 1958, Kneale was channeling civil unrest and race riots that were going on at the time in Nottingham. Ten years later when Hammer mounted its adaptation, the Civil Rights movement was in full swing in the US. Even today, its themes of buried rage, mistrust of authority and xenophobic fear as pertinent as ever in the wake of an incredibly divisive US election. One of the film's great-

est strengths (and helping to cement its lasting impact) is Quatermass' determination to stay grounded in reason, but he too succumbs to an alien, unrecognisable instinct to rage and kill with the feuding masses. Ultimately, the movie's protagonist is helpless to save his own race, and this air of doom hangs over the whole story.

The film boasts a notable following, including John Carpenter, whose enthusiasm for the series can be seen in an interview on Kino Lorber's *Quatermass Experiment* Blu-ray. The filmmaker ended up hiring Kneale to help pen *Halloween II*, *Season of the Witch*, and even took on the nam-de-plume of "Martin Quatermass" when writing *Prince of Darkness*. And with good reason – Carpenter's tale about an unearthed ancient cylinder has more than a few nods to *Pit*. Even his remake of *The Thing* owes some debt to the story on both a thematic and narrative level.

Carpenter's not alone in his affection. Walter Ken Neumann has pointed out similarities in Kneale's plot to Stephen King's *The Tommyknockers*. And there are at least a half dozen *Doctor Who* stories that owe their existence to *Quatermass and the Pit*, particularly the 1977 Tom Baker serial *Jaws of the Fendahl*, about an impossibly ancient skull that, once unearthed, exudes a mind-controlling power among the general populace. *Quatermass* formed the building blocks for 1970s *Doctor Who* in general, in which the show's budget required more lean earthbound adventures. In these serials, Jon Pertwee's Doctor makes for an interesting analogue of Professor Quatermass, the lone voice of reason among rash military officers and useless bureaucrats.

Remembering Kneale (1922 – 2006) in *The Guardian*, writer-director Mark Gillis said it best when he stated that *Quatermass and the Pit*, "with its brilliant blending of superstition, witchcraft and ghosts into the story of a five-million-year-old Martian invasion – is copper-bottomed genius."

JEFF STIMPINGLAS



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